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The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Volume I

THE WORK OF WALTER STEILBERG AND JULIA MORGAN

Interviews with:

Walter Steilberg
Robert Ratcliff
Evelyn Paine Ratcliff
Norman Jensen
Jack Wagstaff
Edward Hussey
George Hodges

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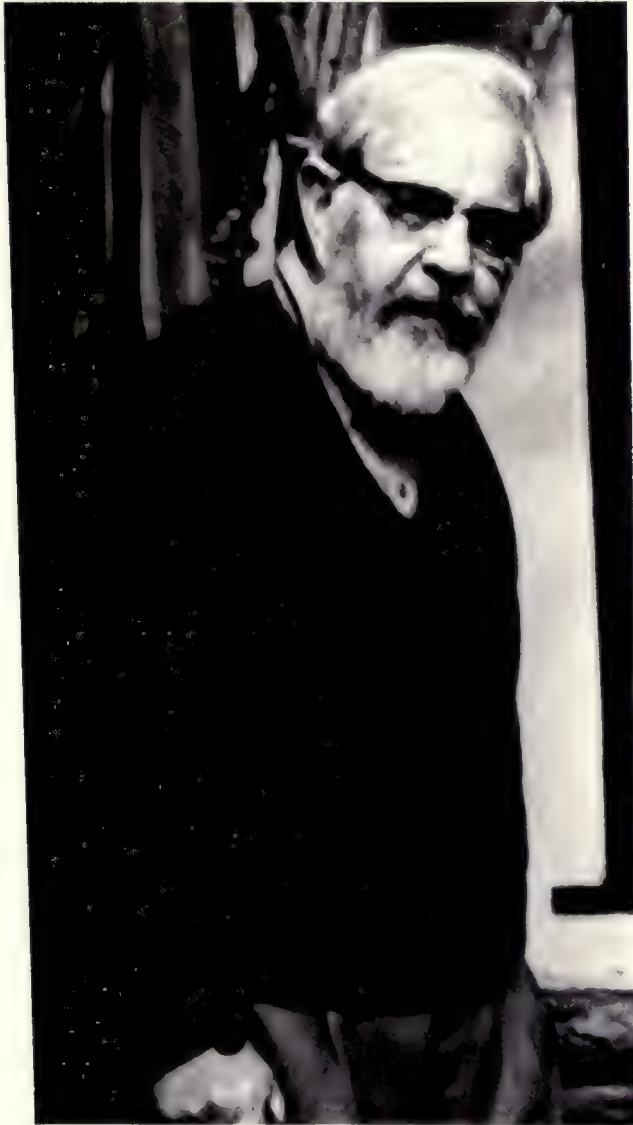
REMINISCENCES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1904 to 1954
Warren C. Perry

&

WALTER STEILBERG, ARCHITECT: THE MAN, HIS TIMES, HIS WORK
Helena Steilberg Lawton

Edited by
Suzanne B. Riess

Copy No. /



Walter Steilberg

Volume I
THE WORK OF WALTER STEILBERG AND JULIA MORGAN

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

The two volumes of the Julia Morgan Architectural History Project appear at a time when women in professions are being focused on with increasing frequency and clarity. Julia Morgan, the first woman graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the designer of San Simeon, was a totally successful woman architect, yet so little known as to be until recently only a note in the architecture books. The following oral history transcripts with associates in the Julia Morgan office, staff, clients, and her nephew and his wife, enlarge the picture.

In her day Julia Morgan was unwilling to grant interviews. Her time was totally committed to her work, and she felt her work spoke for her. All the individuals interviewed in these oral histories agree in their assessment of Julia Morgan as scrupulously private, and certainly this affected how deeply known she was to her associates and to the world.

Yet although she courted anonymity, the many beautiful houses that are her work are proudly called by their present owners "Julia Morgans."

Walter T. Steilberg

The first volume of the Julia Morgan Architectural History opens with Walter Steilberg as the subject and interviewee. For many years Mr. Steilberg was the primary source of information on Julia Morgan. She had full confidence in him as an architectural engineer, and as a reliable friend; his testimony regarding her shows how well he understood her plans and needs.

The interview moves from Walter Steilberg's own history to his early memories of the beginnings of the William Randolph Hearst-Julia Morgan working relationship, and to Mr. Steilberg's execution with Miss Morgan of many major commissions, often for Hearst. Walter Steilberg was unique as an architect because of his strong research interest in materials; after 1921, he had his own office, yet he continued to take on assignments for Julia Morgan.

After Mr. Steilberg's unfortunate accidental death cut short his interview, his work was viewed further in two reminiscent and appreciative interviews, one conducted with friends Robert and Evelyn Ratcliff, and one with associates Jack Wagstaff, Norm Jensen, Edward Hussey, and George Hodges. Helena Steilberg Lawton has further enhanced the value of the Steilberg interviews by her appended commentary and additional material relating to her father's career independent of Julia Morgan.

Warren Charles Perry

While Walter Steilberg's occasional work at the University of California was in consulting and building, his contemporary, Warren Perry, was a University man who, after his study in Paris, came back to teach the next generation of architects. Dean emeritus of the University of California School of Architecture, Warren C. Perry was interviewed in an effort to enrich the historical material available on architecture in Berkeley. Having followed John Galen Howard--with whom Julia Morgan worked on early campus buildings when she returned from Paris--and preceded William Wilson Wurster as dean of the architecture school, Mr. Perry was in a good position to observe change and to set the early 1900s scene.

Reading of Warren Perry's school experience at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, one begins to imagine how difficult it would be for a young woman to step into the same situation, yet Julia Morgan did, and came back well-trained and confident of her ability. (Her architectural drawings from the Paris years were exhibited at the Oakland Museum in January 1976, the first Morgan exhibition of any magnitude.)

The House at 2821 Claremont Boulevard, Berkeley

In the second volume of the Julia Morgan Architectural History, Miss Morgan is first viewed rather abstractly from the vantage of one of her works, the splendid house at 2821 Claremont Avenue, a commission which has had an unusual history. Now the home of the vice-president of the University, originally the Seldon Williams residence, it is a sample of Julia Morgan's residential best. Yet disappointingly to Julia Morgan it was never really lived in. Today, however, it fills easily its role as a grand and public home, visible proof of the fineness and quality of a Julia Morgan house.

Wishing to document the origin and changes in that house, a series of short interviews was undertaken with Mary Grace Barron, the real estate agent handling the sale of the house for the Williams family; Kirk O. Rowlands, involved with the purchase by the University; Norma Willer, project architect who worked on the redecorating of the house; Quintilla Williams, one-time housekeeper at 2821 Claremont; and Catherine F. Nimitz, widow of Admiral Chester Nimitz, and at one time a neighbor of the house.

The Office: Edward Hussey and Dorothy Wormser Coblentz

The focus of the second volume then moves from the house to the draftsmen in Julia Morgan's office. Edward B. Hussey and Dorothy Wormser Coblentz worked for Julia Morgan in the 1920s when the work on San Simeon and other buildings for William Randolph Hearst, many YWCAs, and

institutional and residential work was keeping a large staff occupied. Edward Hussey was interviewed particularly about his role on the site for the Honolulu YWCA. His comments on Julia Morgan, her few idiosyncracies in the office; on Bernard Maybeck, with whom Mr. Hussey also worked extensively; and his memories of years with Walter Steilberg, add to the record on all three architects. Mr. Hussey was also most helpful in sharing pictures and drawings from the work at Principia College, a job which involved the Morgan office as well as the Maybeck.

Dorothy Wormser Coblentz has a vivid appreciation of what being employed by Julia Morgan meant--fine training, high expectations, no nonsense. We can guess at what Julia Morgan might have hoped would result from the schooling she gave the young women architects in her office, yet not one of the women who worked for her chose to commit her life to architecture as fully as had Julia Morgan. Dorothy Wormser also worked for a period in Henry Gutterson's office, and that experience gives her additional insight into the different qualities and expectations of the Julia Morgan office.

Family and Private Life

The interviews with Morgan North, nephew of Julia Morgan, and his wife, Flora d'Ille North, are a major addition to the biographical material extant on Julia Morgan. Family history is vital in looking at the enormous will and determination Julia Morgan brought to whatever she did, from being admitted into the profession to never letting down in quality or in purpose.

Flora and Morgan were at first reluctant to go another round of questions on Aunt Julia because their time has so much been taken up with those curious about Julia Morgan, newly "discovering" this first woman graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. But the Norths' respect for the memory of Julia Morgan, and their unwillingness to endorse half-done research on her, convinced them that if they consented to the tape-recordings they might be able then to refer some of the inquiries to the interviews on file in The Bancroft Library.

Morgan North's "note to the historian" (p. 237) and his suggestion that no writer so far has dealt sufficiently with what Miss Morgan was trying to do in her work, present a challenge. The next step perhaps will be a study of the Morgan work, and the correspondence, along the lines sketched by Mr. North.

An almost endless horizon of research and interviews with clients, workmen, and myriad persons who had various contacts with Julia Morgan is suggested by the three other interviews in the volume. Bjarne Dahl,

of Julia Morgan's office staff, recalls Julia Morgan admiringly. He, and his son, and Polly McNaught, who worked briefly for Julia Morgan, and Hettie Belle Marcus, a client and friend, all speak of high standards and human touches; the lady architect had the strength to resist compromise without flawing her femininity.

Conduct of the Interviews

The interviews in these volumes, except where otherwise noted, were tape-recorded for the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library in 1974 and 1975 by Suzanne B. Riess. Excerpts are included from a 1968 interview with Dorothy Wormser Coblentz conducted by Elizabeth Sacks Sussman and Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim, authors of Building With Nature.

Sally Woodbridge, devoted student of Bay Region architecture and author of Buildings in the Bay Area, interviewed Walter Steilberg at the request of the Regional Oral History Office because of her established interview relationship with him. (Earlier Steilberg/Woodbridge interviews are deposited in The Bancroft Library.) A commentary on Mr. Steilberg by Sally Woodbridge is included in Volume I.

Sara Holmes Boutelle, whose interest in Julia Morgan has led her to form the Julia Morgan Association, to organize tours and meetings, and to write about the architect's work, was present at the second of the North interviews, and was the interviewer in the Dahl interview.

All of the interviews were held in the homes of the interviewees, with the exception of the interviews with Kirk O. Rowlands, Norma Willer, and the group interview with associates of Walter Steilberg, which took place in offices of the University of California at Berkeley.

The interviewees reviewed and checked their transcripts, making minimal changes; only Walter Steilberg was unable to complete this step because of his sudden death, and we are grateful to Helena Steilberg Lawton for her help in editing her father's memoir.

The gap in time between the first and last interviews with Flora and Morgan North explains why some subjects were approached twice. To edit these questions further would mean a departure from the oral history aspect, and the Norths, writers and editors both, have been patient with the demands of oral documentation.

Related Material

Blueprints, bills, and itemization of furnishings for 2821 Claremont Avenue; an interview by Harold Lyman with Walter Steilberg; tapes of some of the interviews; and a variety of material related to this study is

deposited in The Bancroft Library. A collection of Julia Morgan drawings is presently housed in the documents collection of the College of Environmental Design, and letters, more drawings, and blueprints are in the Morgan and Flora North Collection.

Throughout the interview the concurrent research by Bernice Scharlach, Richard Longstreth, and Elinor Richey is alluded to. Miss Richey includes an interesting chapter on Julia Morgan in her Eminent Women of the West.

These volumes join the shelf of Regional Oral History Office interviews with California architects William Wilson Wurster and William Charles Hays. They also take their place with interviews conducted with successful women such as Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange Taylor, Grace McCann Morley, Portia Bell Hume, Emily Huntington, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, the suffragists, pioneers in education and the arts, trail-blazers in political life in California. All of these women differ in their attitudes toward woman's role; together with Julia Morgan they enlarge the definition of achievement.

In Conclusion

Finally, even if the Regional Oral History Office had existed while Julia Morgan was still living, there is no doubt but that if asked Miss Morgan would have refused to give time or endorsement to an interview. This we remained aware of throughout the project. Julia Morgan's very nature was to be private and all the "whys" of that which persist in the public and self-revealing 1970s finally are irrelevant.

There are many flamboyant personalities, monument-makers in abundance among architects, and there are few of the variety of Julia Morgan. Her early acceptance in the profession may perhaps be credited to her convincing quietness; indeed there was never a reason for her to change, never a need to shine more brightly, loom more largely, or to be anything more than the absolute master of her craft.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

February 1976
The Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

AN INTRODUCTION TO WALTER STEILBERG
by Sally Woodbridge

I first met Walter Steilberg when he was 85. He agreed to talk to me, as he did to many others, about Julia Morgan, so I spent many hours sitting in the livingroom of the house he designed as his home on Mosswood Lane, listening. Gradually I realized that he was as interesting as his famous employer. Although he was a fine engineer, dedicated to his profession and to the community, it seemed to me that he was most remarkable as a splendid human being who had stored up in his many years of life an impressive record of relationships that, at 85 and after, still replenished his life. He was also blessed with the capacity to remember it all, or at least a remarkable amount.

Clearly one of the enduring relationships of his long life was with Julia Morgan who, it seemed to me, was the ideal architect for him. (It is interesting that he never spoke of her as a woman architect.) He always spoke of her patient concern with and dedication to the craft of her profession; brilliant concepts or any emphasis on design as a thing in itself had little place in her work or in his. Quality, permanence, and appropriateness were paramount.

Walter Steilberg's own house was obviously a product of this line of thought. It is perfectly sited on its hillside lot. Even before it was shrouded in the trees (Walter planted them himself as well as those on Mosswood Lane) it was probably not intrusive. Although it has a Mediterranean look to it, it is also typical of the fusion of local interests and personal ideas that typified many Berkeley houses of the period, namely a strong concern for the environment or site and a sympathetic use of natural and hand-crafted materials. (Although the house is stucco and not shingled the wood detail is carefully designed and the emphasis of the whole is warm and romantic.)

When I wanted to photograph Walter for an article in Architectural Forum of September, 1973, he asked that I photograph him in front of his row of poplar trees on Mosswood Lane because he said they were his major work. This kind of modesty coupled with a general desire on his part to extoll the accomplishments of the many wonderful people he had met in his life made it difficult to extract from him a list of his own achievements. He never did produce for me a list of his own work in spite of repeated requests on my part. I suspect that an accurate record of his work will have to come from others.

The professional challenge that most intrigued him was the development of reinforced concrete which came about in his lifetime. This interest was undoubtedly precipitated to some extent by the local catastrophes of the 1906 earthquake and the Berkeley fire of 1923. (He made a careful record of structural damage caused by the latter as well as whatever earthquake damage he could detect.) Part of his experimental efforts in concrete included two concrete houses, one on his own property

and one at the intersection of Mosswood Lane and Panoramic on the east or uphill side of the street. His conviction that wood would vanish as a readily-available building material was not borne out as rapidly as he anticipated, but its use has been increasingly restricted over the years. It remains to be seen if his two houses will stand as prophetic examples.

January 10, 1975
Berkeley, California

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REMINISCENCES OF WALTER STEILBERG

Interviews with Walter Steilberg
conducted by Sally Woodbridge

WALTER STEILBERG, FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR

An Interview with Robert Ratcliff
and Evelyn Paine Ratcliff conducted
by Suzanne B. Riess

REMEMBERING WALTER STEILBERG

An Interview with Norman Jensen, Edward
Hussey, George Hodges, and Jack Wagstaff
conducted by Suzanne B. Riess

I FAMILY BACKGROUND OF WALTER STEILBERG

Woodbridge: Would you tell me something about your ancestry?

Steilberg:* Both sides of my family were of Scandanavian--more specifically, Swedish--descent. There were two soldiers in the armies of Gustavus Adolphus, and when they got to Hanover, the two of them were captured by German girls, and that was the beginning of that [laughs].

Then there was an admixture of Dutch from the fugitives from Holland. After that, even a Scotsman made his way into the family. The British sent over two regiments of Scots to help Frederick the Great, and one of them was captured by a German girl in Bremen; so he stayed there, and thereby comes the Scotch strain. That is the remote ancestry.

I tried to find out specifically about the various ones. I looked them up in the church records, way back in 1914. It was all put down very neatly--the mother and father and the godparents, and so on--and then came the one name, of a girl, whose mother's name was given; then the father, unbekannt. The Lutheran minister kindly pointed out that there were quite a number of "unbekannt" fathers. He said Germany has had that fate for centuries, with armies marching back and forth over the country, and there were "unbekannt" fathers. So, that's the dark side of the picture.

In the time of the regency period, Hanover was still part of England. In fact, I had a coin made with the date of my mother's father's birth, 1820. It was a beautiful coin. He came to this country indentured to a British cabinet maker in Pittsburgh.

Woodbridge: I thought you were going to say New York.

* Walter Steilberg died on December 7, 1974. He did not see this manuscript. Editorial additions by his daughter, Helena Steilberg Lawton, are indicated in the text.

Steilberg: No, in Pittsburgh--most of the Germans came in that way, I suppose because of the ports being Bremen and Hamburg. He walked from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, most of the way, he said, because the people who drove carriages were in too much of a hurry, and the ox carts were too slow.

So he worked in Pittsburgh for seven years to get his certification as a master cabinet maker. He started in when he was fourteen, and at twenty-one he was a master cabinet maker.

Woodbridge: That's very reasonable--you get out of college these days not nearly so well prepared.

Steilberg: He was well prepared; he was really very well prepared. In fact he went on to become one of the largest furniture manufacturers in that part of the country--in Cincinnati and Louisville.

Woodbridge: He went from Pittsburgh not directly to Louisville.

Steilberg: No, he went to Cincinnati, and then to Louisville. His factory, which employed several hundred men, was in Louisville.

Woodbridge: What was his name?

Steilberg: His name was originally Wrangelke, but he changed it to Wrangelmeier--one of his ancestors was a mayor of a small town. They said that Wrangelke was not merely Swedish, but probably a touch of the Finnish. Wrangelmeier was the name of the factory.

Woodbridge: In Louisville. Was it "and Sons," or "Incorporated"?

Steilberg: No, I don't think it had any fancy name. He prospered there. He had left Germany when he was ready to go to high school, you might say, but afterwards he educated himself very well indeed. He went to Europe three times, and he was preparing to go to the Orient when his health failed.

Woodbridge: My father came from Sweden, not indentured, but he immigrated to make the family fortune. He docked in Boston, and there were people around the docks hiring people to work in the mines at that time. He was hired right away and went right from Boston to Colorado. He loved Colorado--he had never seen anything like it in his life. He made a lot of money, and then he

Woodbridge: went to Illinois and bought land. The rest of his history was rather typical of the Swedish immigrants of the time. He went back many times to Europe, and I wonder how long it took your grandfather to get there.

Steilberg: He was well set up in business by the mid-forties. At any rate, it was in the 1860's that he took his first trip to Europe; of course, trips to Europe then were pretty rare--they cost a lot of money, too, in the money of the time.

Woodbridge: And the Civil War must have been [a factor].

Steilberg: Just after the Civil War he made his first trip. No, he made it sometime before the Civil War, because he got onto the idea of using a gumwood veneer. The gumwood of the south was a very beautiful wood, but it would not stay in place, it walked all over the place. So he went to Germany, where they had the science of laminating pretty well. They had a lot of cottonwood, which made an ideal base, because it always stays right where you put it, and you can cut in any direction--there's almost no grain to it. So I think that's where he really made his larger amount of money, right after the Civil War, in veneer furniture.

Woodbridge: That was a great period for veneered furniture, wasn't it?

Steilberg: Yes. In fact, they found out that that was about the only way you could make good furniture--veneering it. [Otherwise] it won't stay in place, and they haven't time to cure it.

My grandfather used to show me with great pride his graduation piece from his shop in Pittsburgh. It was a solid mahogany chest and he took great pride that there was this big bottom drawer that he could pull out with one finger.

Woodbridge: What happened to it?

Steilberg: I don't know. I guess it was just sold at auction. I was in San Diego at the time.

Woodbridge: You were saying that he was preparing to go to the Orient when his health failed.

Steilberg: Yes. His health failed, and he came out to California. He was my first teacher, when I was a boy; I was pretty much his companion from the time I was in high school.

Woodbridge: He must have lived a long life.

Steilberg: Yes, he did--he lived to be eighty-nine.

Woodbridge: What did he teach you?

Steilberg: Geography, in particular. I think he was the first one to call my attention to the strange configurations of Africa and South America. There was at that time some talk about the continental drift, and I remember his showing me--he had an orange in his hand at the time, and he said, "You know, the depth of the oceans is no more than the mist on that orange, in relation to the size of the globe," and he said, "I can't see how there is anything in this silly notion."

Woodbridge: Did he teach you cabinet making?

Steilberg: No. In fact, see those thumbs? I was trying to build a dog-house one time, and my father came along and looked at my sorry efforts. He held up my little hand like that, and shook his head and said, "No, son, with ten thumbs you'll never make a cabinet maker. Perhaps you can make an architect--you do well enough with your books and your drawings--but you'll never make a cabinet maker."

Woodbridge: Did that make him sad?

Steilberg: Yes, it did, a little. But he was consoled by the fact that I did well with my books and drawings.

Woodbridge: Did he go into business with his father?

Steilberg: No, he came at a very much later date. He was born in 1840, and got here just in time to take part in the Civil War. I learned something about history from him: he had a theory that there need never have been any Civil War if Lincoln and Lee had just had an hour together. He said he learned soon after the Civil War that Lee had much the same ideas as Lincoln had.

And he told me this about the Civil War: they had a major in their regiment who had been a professional soldier--he had fought all around the world; he was German--and who had a tough attitude toward the war. This major used to storm around saying that there had never been so much ammunition wasted in any war as there was in this one. He would say, "It must take a thousand

Steilberg: shots to kill a man in this war; you fellows all shoot into the air, and so do the rebels. And you despise the men who do any good: the sharpshooters you won't associate with." That was the feeling.

My father would say that when you look at pictures of the Civil War you never see a man bayonetting anyone; they'll beat him to death with the butt of a gun, but they won't stick a man. He said, "I saw a major stick three one time, and several others got very sick at the sight of it. You'll find that in time that will come out in the history--that there was very little bayonetting done in the Civil War."

Woodbridge: He fought on the Union side? I know Kentucky is divided up.

Steilberg: Yes. On my mother's side there was a cousin who was in the Confederate army.

Woodbridge: Your father didn't become a cabinet maker?

Steilberg: Yes, he was a good cabinet maker, too. He had his apprenticeship in Cincinnati, in the Mitchell and Ramorsburg shop. Many of them headed for Cincinnati--for some reason there were a lot of Germans there.

Woodbridge: I know, having grown up in Louisville, that there is a big German colony in Cincinnati. I never knew why.

Steilberg: Many of them drifted down to Louisville, too, I think. At one time Louisville was quite a music center. My mother sang contralto in the Liederkrantz there.

Woodbridge: Did your father have his own shop?

Steilberg: No, he had no shop. After the Civil War he did work in my grandfather's--my mother's father's--shop. Then they thought he had tuberculosis, and he was sent out here to California.

Years afterwards they found out he had a little sliver of bone, which he had gotten in one of the last fights of the Civil War when his horse was shot and rolled on him. A little rib splinter had caused bleeding and hemorrhaging even as late as 1892, as I remember--thirty years afterward. They weren't sure of it until there was an autopsy. They had suspected it from an x-ray taken when x-rays came into being in about 1904 in

Steilberg: San Diego. Eventually it became enclosed. As I knew him, my father was an incredibly rugged person. He lived to be eighty-seven.

Woodbridge: This didn't keep him from his work?

Steilberg: No, not until just a short time before his death it broke out again.

Woodbridge: He came to San Diego, then; did you come with him?

Steilberg: The family moved to San Jacinto first in 1890. I was four years old. First my father was wheat-growing there. Then my grandfather had acquired several orange-growing properties around San Diego, and he wanted him to go down there. So the family moved to San Diego at that time. About that time my grandfather's health gave, so he came to live with us--that was about 1892, I guess. At any rate, I grew up in San Diego and graduated from high school there in 1904.

Woodbridge: The business in Louisville was just sold?

Steilberg: Yes, on account of my grandfather's failing health. The people who took it over just milked it, I think.

Woodbridge: So your father didn't practice cabinet-making when he came to California? He became a rancher.

Steilberg: Yes, he became a rancher.

Woodbridge: You were only four years old when you came.

Steilberg: I remember very little. My earliest memory is of Mount San Jacinto, covered with snow. There had been a heavy snow in the night that cleared the air, and all of a sudden I remember going out on the porch, and there was this enormous white mass.

Woodbridge: That must have happened very few times. How tall was it?

Steilberg: Oh, ten or twelve thousand feet--it's one of the largest mountains there.

II EARLY EDUCATION AND APTITUDES

Woodbridge: Were you near enough to San Diego that you had considerable contact with the town?

Steilberg: It was seven miles out.

Woodbridge: How did you get to school?

Steilberg: All through high school I walked to the car line, which was about three miles, and then after I got off the car it was another mile to the high school. Of course, people thought nothing of it then--it was no chore at all.

Woodbridge: Did you have the impression then that in Southern California land was booming, and that people were buying it?

Steilberg: Yes, indeed, and also that you could lose money in it--my grandfather lost a lot of money in that. At one time he owned I don't know how many hundred acres right near where the Marine base is, but he let that go to pay taxes on the ranch where we stayed; I think he got a thousand dollars for it.

Woodbridge: Were people speculating heavily in land?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. I remember that at one time in the early 'nineties San Diego was about thirteen thousand, and when I graduated from high school it was sixteen thousand. It started to grow as soon as I left town!

Woodbridge: When did you leave town?

Steilberg: I left to go to Los Angeles to find work. I had worked in San Diego, for Irving Gill. I worked first for J.B. Standard--he was what you'd call a "carpetect": he was a carpenter who had advanced himself and just put on the sign, "architect."

Woodbridge: You were what age?

Steilberg: Eight years old.

Woodbridge: Was this just a summer job?

Steilberg: Yes, and sometimes a Saturday job. I got five dollars a month, and years afterward J.B. Standard told me that my father paid him ten dollars a month for the nuisance of having me in the office. But that was my father--he was an astute psychologist. My motives were strictly mercenary.

High school was really an adventure in my life, because I had such marvelous teachers there that I feel indebted to every one of them. [I had] the same mathematics teacher all the way through, for four years; history, the same; in English, [I had] a different one the last two years, an especially good one; physics; Latin--I learned to like my Latin teacher.

San Diego High School was rugged in those days. The school was accredited to the University--if you graduated there you could come here without any conditional examination. About a third of the high schools [in the state] were accredited. Latin was then prescribed for coming to the University, even in engineering courses, or at least in the architectural courses. You had to have four years of Latin; you had to take an examination in Latin after you had been in college for two years, and with it an examination in a foreign language. You had to pass those examinations with a "B" rating, or you went out--that was it. It was tough. Well, it cut down the population.

I got a condition in Latin, which meant that if I got a condition in one other subject I was out of high school--someone else could come in. There was limited admission--I think they had only three hundred in high school, and they graduated about thirty of them. So my father went in to see Mrs. Wood, who taught Latin. She said, "Well, your son will never be a Latin scholar, I can promise you that. But I can tell you this, if he did as well in Latin as he does in English, history, physics, and mathematics, he would be intolerable."

She said, "I'll see to it that he comes back here, and I'll help him all I can, but I can't make him a Latin scholar." She said, "Some people are constituted that way. I could never be a mathematics scholar."

Woodbridge: But you did have an aptitude for mathematics.

Steilberg: Yes. I had what is known today as a "straight A" in those subjects, and that helped me a lot later.

Woodbridge: Were you encouraged by your father equally for architecture and engineering?

Steilberg: He didn't attempt any differentiation. He was interested in my wanting to draw. My grandfather bought me a T-square and triangle, and I worked with that. He saw that I was interested in that, and he saw that I tried to do other drawing. I was a miserable free-hand craftsman; I never could do well. I had no real talent for drawing, but I suppose I did have a talent for making precise working drawings. So that's the way he got me in this office [Mr. Standard's].

Woodbridge: What did you do for Mr. Standard?

Steilberg: He taught me quite a good deal; I still know how to detail a bevel-hung window or a casement window so it won't leak.

Woodbridge: At that age [eight] he taught you to do that?

Steilberg: Yes. He said, "Now look at this: here's a bevel-hung window. You measure that up--all the in's and out's of the window--and then you just imagine that you're going to put a saw through that. I'll take you to a job and you can see how it goes together." So I still know how to window detail. He was a "carpetect," as I said before.

Another thing he said was, "I want you to go to the Madsen job over here and get a brick stretcher." So I went to the Madsen job and asked for a brick stretcher, and they sent me to another job to get the brick stretcher. At the third one, there was an old Irish brick mason, and he said, [with accent] "Look, son--this is a brick stretcher, when it lies this way in the wall; and this is a brick stretcher when it lies this way in the wall. Take this back to Mr. Standard's desk, and slap it down on his desk, and tell him, 'That is a brick stretcher that you asked me to get.'"

Woodbridge: So he was playing jokes with you.

Steilberg: Oh, sure.

Woodbridge: How long did you work in his office?

Steilberg: A couple of summers. I remember seeing the first gasoline-powered vehicle, which came in with either the Barnum and Bailey or the Ringling Brothers' Circus--it was a tricycle, three-wheeled. "The horseless carriage; the thing of the future," it said. The creatures were all scared to death of it. They had to leave about a hundred yards [between it and the creatures]. Some of our old horses--old draft horses--would practically nuzzle a locomotive, you know; it wouldn't faze them at all. If they saw "the future" coming [laughter]--the horseless carriage--they'd just take off for the next country.

Woodbridge: I remember my mother saying what a terrible time they had with horses, when cars were first on the streets with horse-drawn vehicles.

III EMPLOYERS

Irving Gill

Woodbridge: When you were in high school you worked for Irving Gill?

Steilberg: I worked for Irving Gill while I was in high school during vacations.

Woodbridge: Did you go to him and request a job because you knew him?

Steilberg: Yes. I came to get into Gill's office in a strange way. Next to Standard's office was a dentist's office. The dentist would pull teeth for fifty cents without laughing gas, and for a dollar with laughing gas--and most people didn't take laughing gas. My father asked me about the work there, and I said it was horrible with the people screaming from having their teeth pulled in the next office. He looked thoughtful about it and said, "I understand that, son. During the war I was sometimes put in to helping the blacksmith on Saturday when they pulled teeth, and it was an awful job."

Woodbridge: Imagine having the blacksmith pulling teeth.

Steilberg: Oh, it was common practice. And if the sergeant didn't like you, he'd make you do that. My father said, "We must see if we can't get you out of that office, get you into another office."

Woodbridge: How did you happen to hear about Irving Gill's office?

Steilberg: It was the only other office in town [San Diego].

Woodbridge: Isn't that interesting, that he had no competition at that time. Did he have a lot of people who worked for him?

Steilberg: He had several men at that time. He was in partnership with a

Steilberg: Mr. Hubbard. Mr. Hubbard was, I guess, the first college educated architect who was in the south there; I think there were one or two in Los Angeles. But, as I said, as soon as I left town it started to grow.

Woodbridge: Irving Gill was not educated in school?

Steilberg: No. He was educated, I think, in Burnham's office. No, I think he was educated in Sullivan's office. [Louis] Sullivan was much more of an architect than Burnham, except that Burnham had a very big vision with respect to city planning; he was a way ahead of his time, but he was an administrator, you see, primarily an administrator.

Woodbridge: Gill had a practice that was largely devoted to small institutions and houses, did he not?

Steilberg: At first, yes, but he did do a theatre, and there was a charming little fountain that he did in San Diego.

Woodbridge: Was that when you were working for him?

Steilberg: The fountain was done after I got out of there; I had already gone to Los Angeles. But I learned something from Gill. He was a wonderfully kind person. He'd get drunk every so often and bust up all the furniture.

Woodbridge: You told me once about a party he had.

Steilberg: Oh, yes. He'd get drunk and pile up all the stools and furniture on the tables, and the office would be just a wreck, you know. He was a powerful man--not so very large--and he'd take one of these stools with an iron head and throw it against the file or something. It was just a complete wreck. It looked as if a bull had been in there, "a bull in a china shop."

Woodbridge: Did he have to replace the furniture?

Steilberg: Yes. He was making a good deal of money then. He was a very kindly and generous person, though. I sent him this little article I wrote for the Architect and Engineer on the Fabricrete construction, and he wrote me one of the nicest letters I've ever had from anyone; it was wonderful. I don't know where it is now. I'm afraid it's gotten lost. And he wrote me a letter once when I was in college. He said, "You must come to San Diego soon and see your father and persuade him to be more careful about having a lantern on his carriage, or wagon, when he drives into town in the late afternoon or evening. Your father doesn't understand that automobiles are the rulers of the road now, and that he is expected to have a taillight on his horse-drawn vehicle. I got one for him, but I don't know how well he'll keep it going." That shows what kind of a person he was.

I was crazy about fireworks when I first started to work for him--I was just a freshman in high school, I guess. All boys were crazy about fireworks in those days, because of the Spanish-American War, you know. He and a lady friend drove out to see us--we lived seven miles out of town--to see my display of fireworks. He was a very warm, understanding person.

Woodbridge: He did design things--he had a very firm hand in that?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. He was a marvelous draftsman. I used to marvel at his drawings. And he used to do watercolors such as Dong Kingman has done in the later drawings he did in illustrating the book San Francisco, with Herb Caen--just the outline, and then let the water go. Gill would do that, and it seemed to me they were just so wonderful--he'd do them in just a couple of hours. He could make a perspective of a house...he did several at Newport, Rhode Island, you know, one a very large and sumptuous one.

Woodbridge: Was he from New England?

Steilberg: I think he was born in Buffalo, but he worked in Chicago. He drew this sketch--no elevations had been drawn for the thing at all; he had just drawn the plan. He worked from the plan. I guess he got that from Sullivan. He made the plan, but no elevations had been drawn at all. He had this plan up on the wall, I think, as I remember, and he was working right on the floor--he just drew a perspective of it right there, just like that, with his free-flowing water color. And it was all done in a

Steilberg: day, I think; and that was the presentation. He had that sense. He was a very talented man.

There's another thing that he's not credited for: he was working strong for simplicity. When people did Spanish things they still had to put on these phony gables, you know, and they didn't make any effort to retain the simplicity of the Spanish work, or the Mission work, or the Colonial stuff, at all. Gill went right back to that [simplicity] on the interiors. He saw that one of the beauties of those Spanish interiors was the large plain surfaces, and the doors just fastened onto the jamb, you know--no fancy moldings around them at all--with a tile base. He did that, even in his frame houses. I remember Standard's being shocked by the fact that the man had no casings on his doors.

When you put in a door jamb, the door jamb comes in here [demonstrates], and then there's a little space for adjustment; then you put a "ground," as it's called, a 3/4" x 3/4" strip, here, or sometimes two of them if you have a wide casing, a nailed casing, on them. Gill would take both that ground out, and that ground out, and just put a wide piece of wood in there; and then he got something to fasten that to here, you see. He actually got a better construction than the other, because it was one piece.

Gill never had any of this "spitting on other people's work" business, you know, that some of the architects of that time had. There was an incredible amount of "biting," and that sort of thing--it always seemed to me such petty stuff. After all, if you do your work that speaks for itself--you don't have to go around knocking other people's work.

Woodbridge: I always had the feeling, in reading about him, and in looking at the work that was done contemporary to his work, that he was very interested in geometry. I don't suppose he ever talked about it in that way.

Steilberg: No, I don't remember it. That would show, though, I think, in this little fountain he did for the plaza there in San Diego. Maybe I can draw it for you [draws]. This was a pool in here. This is not in perspective, this was set back again...this drawing is an insult to Mr. Gill, but that was the substance of it.

Woodbridge: Was this an extraordinary commission for him?

Steilberg: I think so. That was civic work, and I don't know how he got that.

Woodbridge: I associate some institutions with him--nursing homes, or a hospital...

Steilberg: I don't know. But I have a book about San Diego--I don't know whether you have it or not--and I think it has some of those portions of his work, but not very good ones. There's one that I think was rather poor of Gill, that shows a house standing on a hill.

Woodbridge: What sort of work did you do in Gill's office?

Steilberg: Largely tracing, or drawing up simple things. After all, I was only fourteen to eighteen years old.

Woodbridge: You also worked for him during vacations from school?

Steilberg: Yes. Sometimes I would draw up the working drawings of a small building, and that sort of thing.

Woodbridge: It does suggest, though, that you did use your T-square and triangle quite a bit.

Steilberg: Yes, I became fairly adept with a T-square and triangle by the time I was eighteen.

Myron Hunt

Woodbridge: When you got out of high school you went to Los Angeles?

Steilberg: Yes, right away, because there was opportunity there, and my sister was living there, so I just stayed with her. I got a job in the office of Myron Hunt. Hunt was a marvelous man.

Woodbridge: He had a large practice, didn't he?

Steilberg: Yes, he did. It was just residences at the time I was there--or mostly that. But afterwards he got quite a large practice.

Woodbridge: About how many people were in his office when you were there?

Steilberg: About half a dozen. Of course, at that time that was a large office. I don't think Hubbard and Gill ever had more than five at any time, including myself--and I made the blueprints, too, in that office.

I graduated from blueprints when I got to Los Angeles, because there they had a blueprinting plant; but there was no blueprinting plant in San Diego. In fact, just before I went into Mr. Standard's office, they had been making the blueprint paper themselves. There were still some of the chemicals there, and the white blueprint paper. I was one of the first ones in that office to use ready-made blueprint paper. Saturday was the blueprinting day, usually, and the office was hung with wet blueprints. [End of tape.]

Woodbridge: The drawings are very large, too.

Steilberg: Well, they usually were quarter scale.

Woodbridge: When you were in Myron Hunt's office--did he do very large, palatial homes?

Steilberg: Yes, some large homes; and he did work on one large hotel--one of the largest jobs in the office there--I think it was the Maryland Hotel. I remember that I had something to do with detailing the pergola on that hotel, which was patterned after something that was in Amalfi. Hunt had made some measured drawings of that and had found that there was some of the same refinement in the Amalfi pergola that there was in the Greek temples; that is, the inclination was not identical--it got a little wider as it got to the center, and closed at the ends again. That shows something of Myron Hunt's temperament.

Woodbridge: By that account, he must have been a very cultured man.

Steilberg: He was. I think he went to the University of Illinois--I'm not sure.

Woodbridge: Was he a native of Los Angeles?

Steilberg: No, he came from Chicago.

Woodbridge: It's amazing how many people came from Chicago.

Steilberg: After all, the Exposition there had a lot to do with it.

Woodbridge: Ah, yes, a great land boom and much opportunity.

Steilberg: The Chicago Exposition had a lot to do with the spread of what you might call "bastard plasticism" all over the country.

Woodbridge: Did he work in historical reference in terms of trying with some accuracy to do detail as it had been done?

Steilberg: I don't think so. I think it was just the principle of the thing; he was just trying to "see" the thing as the Greeks saw it.

Woodbridge: Did he do any other kind of Classical revival?

Steilberg: I don't think so. I felt that Hunt had one of the most genuine approaches to what I prefer to call the "Mediterranean" house, rather than the Spanish or the South French, or whatever, because I think it gives the architecture a little more latitude. After all, basically it's a question of whether you want low slopish roofs and tile and white stucco walls, or whether you want half-timber and steep sloped roofs.

Woodbridge: I was looking in the publications of the day, [and I found] that in Southern California it was clearly very rare to find anything that wasn't done in the Mediterranean revival tradition--everyone seemed to be using it.

Steilberg: Yes, that was a sort of revolt--you might even say a revulsion--against the bastard Mission style, you know, which thought it was Mission if it just had a gable on the roof.

Woodbridge: Yes, that curlicue at the top, the top gable.

Steilberg: Yes, it was about six inches thick [laughs].

Woodbridge: It's interesting that the Mission revival didn't last too long.

Steilberg: No, because it was so mongrel. I think the best revival that ever came of that was George Washington Smith in Santa Barbara. He discovered the third dimension.

Woodbridge: His houses were a little like Gill's. They were fairly simple.

Steilberg: Yes, but Gill's were better planned. In George Washington Smith's houses you would walk right into and through the living room, through the dining room, and on to the bedrooms. They were completely planless, the ones I saw--I only saw a few of

Steilberg: them.

Woodbridge: Circulation just wasn't worked out. Did you know George Washington Smith?

Steilberg: No, I didn't. One of the Cal graduates, a woman, I can't think of her name...

Woodbridge: There was a woman architect from Santa Barbara, Ludovica Riggs. She and Julia Morgan must have overlapped.

How long did you work for Myron Hunt?

Steilberg: I worked there from about May to December, six months, and then I went to San Diego for a short time. I came back and worked there again for a time.

Southern Pacific Railroad

Steilberg: In 1905 the Southern Pacific was advertising for volunteers for the Salton Sea disaster.

Myron Hunt was paying me forty dollars a month, which was not bad at that time; that was like at least five times that amount today. I went down to see the Southern Pacific people and got a job for sixty dollars a month. So I told Mr. Hunt, and he was very nice about it. He said, "I can't afford to pay you that, but I wish you well. If you want a job sometime, come see me." So I got this job with the Southern Pacific Company.

There was an old Frenchman there who had worked with de Lesseps in Panama, Monsieur Deniell. We used to eat our lunch together in a nearby park sometimes. He must have been in his late sixties, I guess--they were desperate for men; age didn't matter at all. I could operate a T-square and triangle very well and knew my math very well, so trigonometry didn't bother me.

He said, "You know, you say your ancestry is Scandinavian and Dutch and maybe a little Scotch, but I think there must have been a Frenchman somewhere, because there's this difference between the Frenchman and those far north people: those northerners are all so righteous about it--they all work because it's the

Steilberg: right thing to do. You like to work because you like to work. I like to work because I like to work, and that's the Frenchman in both of us."

He was a wonderful old man. He left me his tools, wonderful tools made in England, proportion dividers; and he left me several books and other instruments, a plumb bob. It was quite an assortment that he left me.

Woodbridge: How long did you work for the Southern Pacific Company?

Steilberg: A year, and it was really a wonderful experience. I came in contact there with another man of French descent in New Orleans, Armand Mercier. He was head of a transit party--he was an instrument man at that time--and sometimes I went out with him on jobs that were not far afield of the Salton Sea. I went up burning spur tracks at San Bernardino and other nearby towns, and that sort of thing.

When I went to leave the Southern Pacific to go to college, I was able to save up some money and I thought it would keep me for a while--and my father gave me a little. I told Mr. Winn, who was the head of the office there, about it, and he wished me well and gave me a letter to the dean of the college here, [George D.] Louderback, who afterwards became my very good friend. I spoke to Mercier about it, and to Mr. Deniell.

And there was another man who was just visiting there, Mr. Curtis, an old railroad man--they never get away from it. This man had been chief engineer of the Mexican Central, which was a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific. Mr. Curtis said, "I don't think you ought to go to college. You've already gotten as much as you'll get in college. You know how to get fun out of your work--that's the most you'll get out of college. Railroad people will pay anything for that, they have to. That's just priceless to a railroad company, to get someone who doesn't give a damn about the clock and who likes his work, whatever it is."

"I've watched you, and you do whatever the work is--whether it's a big job or a little job, or whatever--and you put your whole heart into it. In a railroad we're all interdependent, and some of these boys--like in the switchtower--have to be on the job, whether they like it or not. In a few years you could get a very good salary. Indeed, they'll keep you all your life."

"Look what Southern Pacific does already: it's the first

Steilberg: company in the nation to put in a lock system, so that you can't have collisions of trains; and it's the first company that's provided hospital service for its employees; and when it retires its men, it puts them in jobs for older people, to keep them going."

That was great stuff, you know, and it made a great appeal to me, too.

Mercier had been to college--he graduated from Tulane--and he said, "I agree with what Mr. Curtis says, but I advise you to go to college. You'll get a lot out of it, although you may not get much more salary than you get now." (Southern Pacific had advanced me from sixty dollars to a hundred dollars a month; for a kid of nineteen or twenty, that was big money in those days.)

So I went to college. But I had had three years of training when I went to college, and those three years' experience in offices, in pushing out things, helped me a lot.

III THE UNIVERSITY YEARS, 1906-1910

Woodbridge: You came right here to UC. What year was that?

Steilberg: 1906. I had had one year of math--analytic geometry--and I got an "A" in both terms. So I got the harebrained idea of studying calculus during the summer, and then taking an examination on it when I came back in the fall. After my examination, I had four years credit in calculus--it was a tough examination--and I got into the junior classes in engineering when I was a sophomore--it was between my freshman and sophomore years.

Woodbridge: Engineering was a four- or five-year course?

Steilberg: Architects had to take strictly structural things--I didn't take surveying, although I had had some experience in it, or hydraulic, or other things that are associated with engineering at that time. But I did graduate with good grades in structural work.

Woodbridge: You graduated as a structural engineer?

Steilberg: No, I graduated as an architect. I took my examination for the architect's certificate in 1911, and the part that lowered most of the other students was duck soup for me, because of the previous experience I had had.

Woodbridge: Did you then get an engineering degree?

Steilberg: No. I practiced as a structural engineer...

Woodbridge: ...with an architect's degree. I guess you can't do that any more.

Steilberg: Some of the engineers objected to my doing that. I had put "architect and architectural engineer" on that article I wrote for the Architect and Engineer, and they said there was no such

Steilberg: thing as "architectural engineer." I said I was sorry, but that in the East, in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, they give us an architectural engineering course, which is no more than what I've had. But I said I would simply put on "Structural design by Walter T. Steilberg."

Woodbridge: Now degrees are sorted out, but then there must have been a lot of confusion.

Steilberg: Yes, there was.

Woodbridge: And clearly your experience was in structural engineering.

Steilberg: I could point to the fact that I had passed the architectural examination, which was a four-day course, with a rating of a hundred, which didn't happen very often.

John Galen Howard

Woodbridge: You received your degree as an architect in 1911? Had you worked in the summer for other people during that time?

Steilberg: Yes, I worked in Mr. Howard's office while I was in college, and got a lot of experience there.

Woodbridge: Did he make a practice of hiring students?

Steilberg: Yes, the ones he could use. He could use me because I was a skilled draftsman--a straight line draftsman, you might say. When I came to college I could make as good a structural drawing as I could when I went out of college. They don't give enough of it in college. When I first worked in Miss Morgan's office, just shortly after I graduated from college, we would pay the people about ten dollars a week, and they were just a dead loss for six months--they didn't know how to draw; they didn't even know how to sharpen a pencil. It was incredible. Our presentation drawings were done in ink on Wattman paper, and in water-color. But what was that in working drawings? In Miss Morgan's office, in all the time I was there, we did our working drawings in ink on tracing cloth.

Woodbridge: You have to be good to do that. I imagine Mr. Howard had a lot of work to do. About how many students did he employ?

- Steilberg: There were two students besides myself, but I was there a longer time than these others were.
- Woodbridge: How many men were there in his office altogether?
- Steilberg: About a dozen men, I suppose, in Howard's office.
- Woodbridge: Some of them must have been faculty from the school, were they not?
- Steilberg: Yes. Hays was in his office for a time. He left to go into business for himself. He had been there as a draftsman. He was then just an assistant professor here, the year before I was there. I think there were one or two others, but I don't remember them.
- Woodbridge: Did you have memorable teachers in architecture at the University at that time?
- Steilberg: Yes, mostly Mr. Howard and Mr. Hays.
- Woodbridge: I have the impression that it was something of a one-man department in many ways.
- Steilberg: William Charles Hays and John Galen Howard were the department for all the time I was there. Mr. Hays was a very good teacher for the elements of architecture, I think, and so was Mr. Howard. I thought Mr. Howard was a wonderful teacher.
- Woodbridge: Everyone seems to remember him as a wonderful teacher, and from what you and others have said, it sounds as though he taught from a very lofty plane--of architecture as a very noble calling. It was not something down there in the practical.
- Steilberg: Yes, I think just the opposite of Julia Morgan in that way. I think Julia Morgan was strictly a medieval architect.
- Woodbridge: Craft was the essential part of the art.
- Steilberg: Yes.
- Woodbridge: I gather from reading about Howard that he felt quite the opposite.
- Steilberg: Well, he wasn't at all stuffy. I can give you an example or two of that. Every Thursday afternoon he had everyone who was in the department, of whatever grade, over to his place for five o'clock

- Steilberg: tea. It was there I learned to sit on one of these chairs that creeps down like this, and hold a cup of tea out like this without spilling it. Right outside was the lanai, and sometimes we met out there. There was this wonderful fireplace with a medallion.
- Woodbridge: Oh, yes, the Michaelangelo.
- Steilberg: That's the best thing that Michaelangelo ever did--I suppose I'm prejudiced.
- Woodbridge: He had a reproduction, a cast, of that?
- Steilberg: Yes, a beautiful one.
- Woodbridge: This is the house on Ridge Road?
- Steilberg: Yes, and that was a marvelous house. A lot of it was shingled, you know. It was a wonderful place to meet. It was really something to go there.
- Woodbridge: He was a formal man, wasn't he?
- Steilberg: In a way. Precise, I guess. He gave the impression to some people that he was formal. I never found him so.
- Woodbridge: He must have had a different public image than he had for his students.
- Steilberg: I think so. I've often wondered about that. I think it might have come on him in dealing with regents [chuckle].
- Woodbridge: All the memories of him present him as quite an aloof man with distinct formal social attitudes. But when I talk to people like you, and other people who knew him as students, I get quite the opposite impression.
- Steilberg: Have you talked with Abe Appleton at all?
- Woodbridge: No, I haven't.
- Steilberg: Well, Abe Appleton was a sort of a protege of Mr. Howard. He came from a poor Jewish family in San Francisco, but he had this incredible gift of being able to draw things, as they were, right out of his head. He made a perspective of the end of the library, and I remember in particular that in it, just as part of the

- Steilberg: entourage, he shows the leaves of some of the pine trees and eucalyptus, and they were botanically correct! I know that because I had a wife who was a botanist, and I know they were very, very precise--and I don't think the boy had ever looked at them in that way at all; I'm sure he hadn't.
- Woodbridge: Howard was fortunate to have a number of people who drew well who worked for him.
- Steilberg: Appleton was the most gifted of those people.
- Woodbridge: Howard himself drew well, did he not?
- Steilberg: Yes. I saw him make the sketches for Sather Gate just in a couple of hours, I think--bing, bing, and there it was. And it wasn't changed materially. Appleton did all the drawings for that. Mr. Howard was most generous in that way. He was giving this poor boy every chance he could to become an architect. Abe never had it in him to become an architect; I don't know why. The buildings he's done as an architect were quite mediocre. But Mr. Howard was really a marvelous person.
- Woodbridge: Did Stafford Jory work for Mr. Howard?
- Steilberg: Yes, after Mr. Appleton. He did work for Mr. Howard. Stafford Jory was a wonderful teacher [at UC architecture department]. He first taught rendering, and afterwards he taught architecture, elements of design. He was a wonderful person. He was two years later than I in graduating--he graduated in 1912, and I graduated in 1910--but I'm sure I had some valuable teaching from him. He was a marvelous person.

The Classmates

- Woodbridge: Who was in your class that went on to practice in the area?
- Steilberg: Well, relatively few. Will Corlett was one of them who afterwards had a big practice. He was a very good friend of mine. His son, of course, is a very good friend; he's very gifted. His father had none of that gift at all; his father couldn't draw as well as I could--and, as you can see, that's a fair sample of my drawing [refers to drawing]. Will was a "square," you might say. It distressed him no end that his son was not after his pattern.

Steilberg: Will, Sr. was a member of the Bohemian Club, but not as an architect--as a pool player. He was a very skillful pool player. It just broke him up that Will, Jr. was not a pool player. I think Will, Jr. has done some of the best modern sculpture that I've seen.

Woodbridge: I didn't realize he sculpted too.

Steilberg: Oh, he does beautiful watercolors and sculpture. I would say he's more gifted as a sculptor than as a watercolorist. He started out as a watercolorist in this free manner that Dong Kingman had, which I admired, and which was in Gill's work. But in his sculpture, especially in wood, he's very fine. Have you seen his house?

Woodbridge: Yes, I think it's very nice. Was there anyone else in the class who became a local architect?

Steilberg: Let's see. Clarence Cullimore was a flop in design. He couldn't do it at all; he just didn't have any talent in that way. But he took part in dramatics, and I remember thinking that "that man has real talent in that direction, and also he has real scholarship in that direction." I've forgotten even what the play was, but it was something that he did that was outstanding. He would have seen that part of Hamlet's speeches were ridiculous--for someone to take arms against a "sea of troubles" was as crazy as King Canute, you know? But they all say it.

Clarence, and possibly Will [Corlett], became an FAIA; but I know that Clarence Cullimore became one long before Will did. It was because he took an interest in adobes. He had his own office, and got quite good practice in Southern California. He was a delightful person.

Maybe I'm prejudiced in his favor because of the Labor Day celebrations we had to take part in. We were always worn out with legwork in the mornings and then we had a bean feed which the girls served, and in the afternoon it was games. What with being worn out with legwork and full of beans, we did what we could. Clarence and I ran and won the three-legged race. We figured out--I think I figured it out--that I would be the pivot man; you see, that's the trick in turning. He was much lighter than I was; so I planted my heavy foot down and we turned on it and won the three-legged race.

But to return to Mr. Howard: I met him one time on the trolley car and I said to him, "You have many windmills on your house now."

Steilberg: "Yes," he said, "The boys seem to be interested in that now, and it won't hurt the house any. They can be taken down easily, and I thought they might as well have their fun." There were about a half a dozen of these windmills--weathervanes, but they all had windmills on them. So the house was left that way.

Woodbridge: That shows a great degree of tolerance on his part.

Steilberg: Yes. He wasn't a stuffed shirt at all.

Woodbridge: But he has a reputation of being reserved, or something.

Steilberg: I think if someone tried to upstage him, he'd get upstaged himself, you see.

Woodbridge: In class, how did he deal with your work?

Steilberg: I thought he was very generous. As an example of that, we had our first project--it was just an esquisse-esquisse; I think it was just a day--and it was a classical doorway. We were all separated and not allowed to see each other, and so on. Even when I was working for Southern Pacific in Los Angeles I was obsessed with Viollet Le Duc, so I was a rabid medievalist when I came to college. And I did remember things fairly well. So I did a pretty fair memory of a south-of-France romanesque doorway.

We were all lined up--I didn't know what the order meant--and I saw mine at the end of the line. I thought maybe that meant it was the worst one, because it wasn't classical at all in the sense that Mr. Howard had meant. He said, "Well, class, in assigning this problem I had in mind, of course, a sort of preliminary feel for your sense of the Greek and Roman renaissance classic, but that word 'classic' does have a broad meaning; it means anything that has stood the test of time and is recognized as something very fine after hundreds of years. Now, this, which I place first, does have a sense of what that period did, and it's done well, so I put this in first."

Woodbridge: That must have made you feel very good.

Steilberg: Yes, it set me up in business [chuckles].

Woodbridge: Did he draw on people's drawings?

Steilberg: He wouldn't do that. Some people, like Mr. Hornbessel [sp?] would

Steilberg: scrawl all over a man's drawings.

Woodbridge: It seems Geoffrey Bangs told me that he would roll out a piece of tracing paper and draw on it by way of criticism.

Steilberg: Yes, he would do that. Geoffrey Bangs was not in my class. He was in a considerably later class. He's a very fine man.

Woodbridge: That's where I got the impression that you had such a good time with Howard in his office.

In Howard's Office

Steilberg: Another instance of that was when we had just finished the competition drawings for the San Francisco Subtreasury. Several times I've been involved in competitions, but every time I have been, the people who were running the competitions would assign to me the job of the section, because the section is the cruel knife that cuts through to the...[inaudible]... the stairways that won't work. So I was working on that, and Abe Appleton was doing the elevations with me. Joe Aronson was doing the plans.

A half a dozen of us had been working on it, and we were very tired. Mr. Howard came into the office late that morning, and he said, "I'm having to go to Seattle to see about something in the Fair there"--he was the architect on that, you know--"and I want you gentlemen to do what you can with your drawings or whatever you're doing." He didn't say go out and have a good time; he just said that.

So we sent out the office boy--I had got past the office boy stage by then--and he brought back bananas and grapes. At that time you could still get those large bananas, before they found they were all going to the dickens because they had to come back to the Chiquita bananas, the wild ones. Well, he got a dozen of these long bananas for twenty cents, and big bunches of grapes. We were all stuffing fruit, and in walks Mr. Howard. He said, "Oh, pardon me, gentlemen; I missed my train to Seattle."

He walked right through the drafting room--a long room, twice as long as this room--to the engineer's room, and closed the door. I well remember pushing a whole banana down my

Steilberg: throat, and others were in a similar predicament. After about fifteen minutes he came out and wanted to see all our drawings, and what we were doing, just as if nothing had happened. Now, that isn't a stuffy man who would do that. Someone else would have thought it would be fun to give these boys hell for loafing.

Woodbridge: Where was his office at this time?

Steilberg: In the Atlas Building. From the windows of the Atlas Building I saw them pull down the Palace Hotel. I went to his office first in 1907. I worked there just after I was a freshman, in 1907 or 1908, I suppose. I worked there seven days a week, and went to college two or three days a week.

Woodbridge: What did he pay you?

Steilberg: I don't know. It was good pay, though--sixteen or nineteen dollars a week.

Woodbridge: Was there an hourly wage for drafting help?

Steilberg: No. He didn't have anything to do with the hiring of men. Raiguel [William Otis Raiguel] did it.

Woodbridge: Geoffrey Bangs told me that Raiguel was the man who ran the money, and Howard had no money sense.

Steilberg: No. Raiguel was a wonderful person. There are so many fine men I've met in this profession and the building business, too; it's been a most fortunate life.

Woodbridge: I heard from Geoffrey Bangs that Howard was a perfectionist to the extent that they would often get nearly to the end of working drawings, and he would want to scrap them.

Steilberg: I saw him wrinkle up the drawings for the front of the library here--all on tracing cloth--and throw it in the wastebasket.

Woodbridge: And do it over?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: Apparently Raiguel took a dim view of such things.

Steilberg: Yes, he did. It took an awful hunk of the budget.

Woodbridge: What an extravagance! I can't remember how it went, but Bangs said that often Howard would lay down one set of rules, and Raiguel would come along and retrieve whatever he could--minimize the losses, you might say. I gather it was a strong trait that Howard had.

Steilberg: Yes, if he thought there was something wrong, he didn't hesitate. What he thought was wrong with the library plan--he had a large arch in the center of this, and he was hesitant about using that great span there. He modified it by bringing two small columns in there.

Woodbridge: It was this elevation in which he had the large arch which he threw out?

Steilberg: Yes. It would have been a mistake, because it would have run counter to everything else there.

1906, The Fire

Steilberg: I did part of the working drawings for Boalt Hall here. California Hall had been built. I came up here at the time of the earthquake; I had a pass anywhere from Southern Pacific, so I came up. (I found it was no mark of distinction when I got here, because Southern Pacific had given free transportation for anyone from San Francisco to any place on its lines. They wanted to get them away from there; the doctors had said there was danger of a pestilence.) I came on the train on the night of the 8th and that was an adventure too.

Woodbridge: What was it like?

Steilberg: I was on the nurses' and doctors' medical train. I got on, well, because I was a Southern Pacific man. I was just a stowaway, you might say. It was interesting because whenever we got to a bridge they'd just creep along. They had a little hand car go along first as a guinea pig.

Woodbridge: Oh, to see if they had been weakened by the earthquake.

Steilberg: Yes. When we got to Fresno, I think it was, I saw the first water tank down. From there on they had to bring water for the engines to drink in trucks from some fire equipment.

Steilberg: When I arrived the city was in flames. I climbed the Big C hill after spending the night sleeping on the floor of the Methodist Church--that was the only housing I could get--and saw the Fairmont Hotel go up in flames; it was supposed to be a fireproof building, but the contents weren't.

*I saw the people coming from San Francisco on the ferries, and I tried to get over there because some of my classmates had gone there. They were in the cadet corps, which had been brought into service. But I was stopped, and I went back to Los Angeles a day or two later.

The evacuation of the city was greatly facilitated by the Southern Pacific's proclamation that it would take anyone from San Francisco to any place on its lines without charge. There were people by the thousands climbing on the trains and going to as far east as New Orleans, or wherever the Southern Pacific went.

The removal of the debris from the earthquake, which caused most of the damage, of course, did take many months, and some of it was still being moved away several years later. The Southern Pacific extended spur tracks up into the city to areas which are now on upper Market, and along Montgomery Street, to take out this rubble. Some of the rubble was crushed and used for concrete in later work.

Architectural Education and Jobs "In Those Days"

Woodbridge: We spoke yesterday a lot about the architecture department and about Mr. Howard. I wondered if you would make some remarks about what the students expected to get from architectural education at the University. Was it supposed to provide them with a professional degree, and then they were supposed to go right out and get a job? Was that the notion?

* The next three paragraphs are from an interview with Walter Steilberg conducted by Harold Lyman, 11 February 1972. The tapes are in The Bancroft Library.

Steilberg: Well, not quite. The course, of course, was entirely different. There was a very definite course in language, in mathematics, and in history, as well as in English and in architecture. I think it had certain advantages in requiring everyone to get the fundamentals of a general education in the undergraduate school. For example, you had two years of French--I don't know if that's still required or not--and two years of introductory mathematics to engineering--that is, you had analytic geometry, which was a forerunner of calculus. Then you had calculus, and in the third year you had to take analytic mechanics. Now, those are all tough courses.

Woodbridge: Analytical mechanics was just for architecture, or engineering?

Steilberg: It was all in the engineering department, but those who wanted to go on and get a degree in architecture had to take those things. So many of them took those courses and then sort of oozed out into interior decorating or landscape work, or what-not, that of the eighteen or so that were in my class, I don't think more than half a dozen of them got the full treatment.

Woodbridge: Actually graduated with a degree in architecture?

Steilberg: Yes. Because I took a good deal more engineering than many of the structural engineers. I had a B.S., not an A.B., and I was glad I had, because it helped me a good deal afterwards.

Woodbridge: Was that Bachelor of Science in Architecture?

Steilberg: Yes. Well, it was just Bachelor of Science, the same degree that civil engineers got. Most of the architects had A.B. degrees. I don't know if there was anyone else with the B.S. degree--maybe Corlett.

Woodbridge: When Julia Morgan went here, did she get a B.S.?

Steilberg: Yes, in civil engineering. Entre nous, Miss Morgan's training in engineering here was pretty elementary. It was given by Colonel Soulé, a retired army colonel. It belonged to another century, really. It was the designing of trusses with wood compression members and steel rods--the sort of thing you still see in the Ferry Building--and steel beams, and all that. But it was extremely elementary in comparison with the work that we had with [Charles] Derleth.

Woodbridge: In other words, the man whom you studied with wasn't here when she was here?

- Steilberg: No. She graduated in 1894, I think it was, and Derleth didn't come until 1902 or 1904. He was a real whiz bang. He was very good, one of the best teachers I have ever known.
- Woodbridge: What other courses were associated with civil engineering that she would have taken?
- Steilberg: She might have had graphostatics, and I don't know whether or not she took descriptive geometry.
- Woodbridge: She didn't speak of her education?
- Steilberg: No. I think the civil engineering course at that time was quite retarded, you might say, because this nice old man was teaching it and he was way behind the times.
- Woodbridge: You said only a dozen or so out of eighteen students actually went on to practice.
- Steilberg: Yes, that's quite true. Many of them went into sales work and into other branches of architecture, but I'm quite sure there were not two-thirds of the class that ever got their certificates.
- Woodbridge: Was this because of a lack of opportunity in the field?
- Steilberg: No. I guess they were just not equipped for it. The whole course that was given was just like Pennsylvania or MIT; it was rather good.
- Woodbridge: I assume there were a lot of jobs waiting.
- Steilberg: I had no trouble at all, but I had more to offer than most of them, because I had had two years' drafting experience. An architect--especially ones who are just starting out and have a small office--is someone who can whang out the work.
- Woodbridge: Relatively speaking, would you say there were half a dozen offices in San Francisco that were busy and were hiring people?
- Steilberg: I think there were more than that, but they were mostly just small offices. I think that probably Mr. Howard's was one of the largest, and I think at its full heat it was going along with eight architectural draftsmen. He had an engineer in the office--a very able engineer, Walter Huber.

I recently talked to one of the men at a meeting at St.

- Steilberg: John's Church, and I asked him if they had descriptive geometry, and he said, "What's descriptive geometry?" He didn't have the faintest idea what it was.
- Woodbridge: I think it's changed around now, and incorporated in other courses.
- Steilberg: I told him what it was, and he said, "Maybe that's 'projections' or something like that."
- Woodbridge: I have a feeling they don't call it by the same name anymore. Of course, now the profession has expanded so and there are so many more students and so many more offices.
- Steilberg: Oh, there's twenty times as many students.
- Woodbridge: At the same time, I would have thought that the post-earthquake city had a lot of building to do.
- Steilberg: They did. They had an influx of men from the East. Dozens of people came out here. In Mr. Howard's office, I know that about half of the draftsmen were ones who came out from the East.
- Woodbridge: Someone told me once that they thought that a lot of Howard's interest in the school here was because he found it very difficult to hire trained people when he came out here, and he was therefore interested in building up the institution to train people.
- Steilberg: He might have had that idea; I don't know. I don't think it was personal.
- Woodbridge: No, I didn't mean that.
- Steilberg: I mention that because when I first came here there were some other boys from San Diego who had gone on ahead of me and were juniors. One of them, Phil Thatcher, said, "From what I hear, Howard is running that school over there and having all these drawings of University buildings made. He got the University job and has an office run by the same man." [sic]

Well, at any time, most of the boys who just get out of college are a dead weight in the office. We used to pay them ten dollars a week in Miss Morgan's office, and lose money on them for the first year, believe me. Most of them don't even know how to put down a piece of tracing paper; they haven't even the mechanics of drafting.

Woodbridge: So he couldn't have done his business at the school.

Steilberg: No. Had he done that, he would have had another burden on his shoulders.

Woodbridge: Clearly, he was interested in architectural education for its own sake, but since there was no school here before he came, most of the trained architects must have come from the East.

Steilberg: Many of them came from two schools; first it was Cornell, but then it was Pennsylvania and MIT. I think that in general Pennsylvania was regarded as the top school, largely because Paul Cret was there. When I saw Paul Cret's Hispanic Museum in Washington, I was never so disappointed in my life. The whole thing was like Frank Lloyd Wright's work. To me, all of Frank Lloyd Wright's work was about two-thirds as large as it should be. It's all low scale. I found that that was largely just a personal taste; why I had it, I don't know.*

Woodbridge: He was a very powerful architectural influence.

Today there is, I think, a great deal of insecurity among architectural students as to whether or not they can get a job.

Steilberg: I'm sure there is, and rightly so.

Woodbridge: Did your classmates--the ones ahead of you--feel confident about getting out and getting a job?

Steilberg: Several in my class got out and got jobs just about as fast as I did. They probably didn't get quite as good jobs right at first, but they soon had even better jobs than I had because some of them had administrative ability, which I never liked at all.

Benjamin Ide Wheeler and the Drill

Woodbridge: I remember you remarked that President Wheeler was a very impressive man.

Steilberg: He was a wonderful person. He had an incredible capacity of talking to 4,000 in the old gym, or 10,000 in the Greek Theatre--so many of my classmates have spoken of this afterwards--and it was just as if he were talking to you in his own office. That's talent.

* See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Woodbridge: He was president the whole time you were there?

Steilberg: Yes. And there was a riot the first month I was here. The students who were drilling didn't like the student officers they had. They were mostly boys who liked to put on uniforms in their home towns, you know, and parade on the Fourth of July. Most of them weren't any more soldiers than I was; none of them knew how to shoot. There was a riot, and I remember well seeing some of these young captains and lieutenants just thrown like logs down the stairs. There were several hospital cases. I don't know how it was finally ended. I think the officers were outnumbered, so they beat it.

Wheeler called a meeting the next day, and he said, "I know you young men dislike this drill very much. The uniforms are inappropriate and uncomfortable and you know very well that drilling with these old Civil War rifles is ridiculous. But I wish to remind you that this is a land-grant university; this university exists because the United States government, at the time of Abraham Lincoln, gave this land to the State of California for a university.

"You've come to this university, and you've been given the teaching here for no cost whatever other than the little labor that the boys have put in for drilling three days a week. And it is teaching that is comparable to that in the best universities in the country--not as good, perhaps, but it is comparable. Do you know how much that costs the State of California? It costs the State of California \$1,000 just for the teaching." He said, "It's up to you to pay it back."

Oh, I felt a little bitter about having to do military service too. Those of us who were "rankers," you might say, did rather despise the officers, a good many of them boys who had been in the militia in their home towns, and only interested in the uniform.

We did have one that was in my company--the one I got into when I was a sophomore--a Captain Steel, who was really a gentleman, and we all thought a lot of him. The word got around--I guess it came from one of the sergeants who had known the circumstances--that he had been putting all his heart into the thing, and took the trouble to learn our names, so that when he met us on the campus he always called us--and you felt very set up, you know--by our last names. In those days, recognition was being called by your last name, and you didn't call anybody by his first

Steilberg: name. I remember that if he called me "Steilberg," why, I was set up for the day [chuckle].

So, there came this exhibition drill where our drilling was to be judged by the commander over at the Presidio--I guess it was a colonel; it might have been a general, I don't know. I hurried down and had a hard time getting out there at all. Then there was this ridiculous charge--"charge bayonets"-- and here I was without a bayonet. I had forgotten to put on my belt with the bayonet. I was going around poking at trees with the muzzle of my gun [chuckle]. Here I was, a private in the rear rank, without any bayonet, or even any belt.

Of course, that was noticed right away, but the officer didn't speak to me. He spoke to Captain Steel, and Captain Steel spoke to the sergeant, and the sergeant spoke to me. I said, yes, I had come down in a hurry from the lavatory, and I was sorry I had forgotten to put on my bayonet.

We got back into line and the sad circumstance was explained to the officer. All of a sudden, his face got as red as a beet. I could see he was just getting livid. "Why," he said, "that man has his leggin's on backwards. Those ties on the inside might have tripped him up; he might have fallen and have the whole company fall over." [Laughs.] So, I was just ready to crawl in a hole.

The strange part of it was, though, that we had tried so desperately to keep the line in order and to keep our position so that we would have a nice even line--all of the things that a military drill master appreciates. And we did that so well that we got the award. So, afterwards, when we had broken ranks and were going away, I passed right close to this general, or whatever, and he just gave me a sly wink. [Laughs.] He didn't mind rubbing it in. But that's the way the military was then.

I despised it because I knew something about guns. I had done a lot of hunting. These guns we had had been given up in the last years of the Civil War. They were old muzzle-loading things. I don't know what in the world was the idea of downgrading the work. The only virtue of them was that you learned to pack this awful weight. They weighed about ten pounds, or something like that, and to drill with that is awfully tiring.

Well, twenty years or more afterwards, I had reason to think that drill was a good thing. There was the Berkeley fire [1923],

Steilberg: and the University had, I guess, by that time, a thousand men who were disciplined. What if they didn't know what to do with the arms, they were disciplined, there was someone in command, and they went right through all of the houses in Berkeley, and there wasn't a person who died in that fire. And that came because they had the well-drilled men right at hand.

Woodbridge: You mean this body of men actually went through houses to see if anyone was left?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. They went right in front of the fire and took people out. There were a lot of helpless old people. I've been in favor of drill, but I don't think their efficiency in that case was in any way helped by their handling of those guns; they might just as well have drawn with broomsticks!

The Campus

Woodbridge: That brings to mind the physical side of the campus. It was totally different.

Steilberg: Entirely. There was no asphalt. Most of the paths just had gravel on them, and in wet weather you would just mire down in those gravel paths.

Woodbridge: There were no vehicles on the campus, were there?

Steilberg: No.

Woodbridge: There were just paths, connected by paths and grass. Now the campus is handsomely landscaped. Was it then?

Steilberg: No, there was no landscaping at all--just a few trees up around where the Greek Theatre is, and some oaks down here. They planted a row of eucalyptus, which is up above the stadium.

Derleth was one of the most impressive men on campus at that time, and I would like to say a word for him. He was another one who had a special talent: he would set up a blackboard and write along, just as if it were a printed page. You'd look at that blackboard when he'd finished it and it was just like something out of a book--all just beautifully diagrammed, and clear as could be. And he was as sharp as they come.

Steilberg: He would also stress the importance of other subjects than his own classwork. I remember his giving us a lecture on descriptive geometry--evaluative--and he said, "Professor Howard is one of the best teachers in the University. I urge you to take your descriptive geometry, not because you have to take it, but because you are going to find it one of the most valuable tools that you have. Engineering failures come not so much from lack of knowledge of calculus as they do from lack of knowledge of descriptive geometry, which means that you are seeing things in three dimensions. Don't think of it just as a tool the architects use for making perspectives or that the mining engineers use for finding where they are in the ground. It's for the civil engineer especially."

He suddenly stopped and whirled around and said, "Layton, what did I just tell you about descriptive geometry?" Layton said, "Oh, er, uh, well, sir, I'm sorry, I didn't get it all. You see, I was out late last night." Derleth stepped back and said, "And what was the color of her eyes?" Layton said, "I can't say, sir." Derleth said, "Well, that was a gentlemanly rejoinder to an improper question. Class dismissed."

"But," he said, "just a minute, all of you. I may ask this question of any one of you next time: What is the importance of descriptive geometry? And you'd better know." A small man would have been irritated, you know.

Woodbridge: Where did he come from?

Steilberg: From Columbia. He used a Columbia textbook.

Woodbridge: I suppose the building on campus was beginning at that point?

Steilberg: We had only two buildings.

Woodbridge: North and South Halls?

Steilberg: No, those were the classroom buildings. But you had California Hall, primarily an administrative center, although there were several big classrooms in there. The largest classroom of that time was in the north end of Cal Hall, which has been changed since then. Then there was a botany building, a philosophy building, the chemical engineering building, and the Mining Building.

Woodbridge: The distance you travelled between buildings was very short?

Steilberg: Yes, in comparison with what it is now.

Student Life

Woodbridge: Did anyone live on the campus?

Steilberg: Yes, there were a few students. There was a Pyra Club, which was the fire brigade, and I think some of the boys lived in that.

The police force at that time consisted of one old man, who went around with a lantern at night and he always carried a long stick. I was one of the first ones to work all night at the architecture building, and I met him one night. He said, "Well, there's not much for me to do. All I use this long stick for is to prod around in the bushes and see that they haven't lingered too long going home from the library." [Laughs.]

Woodbridge: Did many people stay at the campus late at night working?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. I think the architects were the principal sinners, and I was one of the people initiating it because I had been used to working at night.

Woodbridge: Of course, it's an old tradition; the architectural building always burns its lights well into the night.

Steilberg: That would lead me home. I have very poor night vision and I couldn't see at all after working under those bright lights.

Woodbridge: The students lived, then, in boarding houses?

Steilberg: Rooms. I had a room down on Haste Street for seven dollars a month. Seven dollars a month then was like fifty dollars a month now. And I had kitchen privileges.

Woodbridge: Were there houses that were more or less given over as boarding houses for students?

Steilberg: Yes, but most of them were not boarding houses. They were just rooming houses. Then there were fraternities, of course, but only very wealthy boys could afford fraternities.

Woodbridge: Did they have frat houses at that time?

Steilberg: Well, yes. There were very few houses that were built for them. Fraternities and sororities took over some of the old mansions that had outlived their usefulness or outlived their owners.

Woodbridge: Where did the student life center on the campus?

Steilberg: In general, right about where the Campanile is now. There was sort of an open field there, and the library was just the other side of where the Campanile is now. I have a picture showing that.

Woodbridge: And that was where the people crossed paths and gathered between classes. Was there any eating facility on the campus?

Steilberg: No, only the Co-op sold chocolate flicks. That was about the only food that was dispensed on the campus.

Woodbridge: Were there student restaurants in town?

Steilberg: Very few. I think most of them went home to lunch early or brought their lunch with them. I think most of the architects brought their lunch; I did.

Woodbridge: Student life patterns change so.

Steilberg: Oh, they're entirely different today.

Woodbridge: But there's always a place where students mix and get together. Of course, now so much is devoted to students, it's hard to look back and imagine what it was like when it was so much smaller.

Steilberg: I was hoping they would develop a new student center, not all of it down here on Telegraph Avenue. I think that's bad, the proximity of Telegraph Avenue to the student center. I was hoping they would get something up here at that fine esplanade north of the Campanile.

Woodbridge: That's a very dead area.

Steilberg: Yes, it's hardly used, and it's one of the nicest areas on the campus--those beautiful trees there, you know.

Woodbridge: Much of the campus is out of the way to much of the traffic, although I suppose this has happened gradually over a period of years.

Steilberg: That would be such a wonderful place for a student center.

Some years ago the University was considering the acceptance of an old English tithe barn. I guess I haven't sent you drawings of that. It would have provided an area with a fine dining room, a larger dining room than in the men's faculty club, more noble and spacious.

I guess I shocked some of them. I was on a committee of architects and University authorities, and I was sent down to San Simeon with Walter Horn, another member of this committee, and a third member. We reported on it, and it was a very interesting investigation. I enjoyed that very much. I couldn't recommend their acceptance without calling attention to the fact that they would have to put a lot of money in it; it wasn't all a complete thing. They thought of it as a puzzle, you know, that they could just screw together. It was going to cost several hundred thousand dollars.

But the point that I made was that it was such a beautiful structure and showed what skill the people of that time had-- this was built about 1400 or 1500--in not only spanning, but also for bracing purposes, or lateral effects. I said, "It seems to me it could well be used for a beer hall; or, if you want to go back to the original, it was a tithe barn, so let the students pay their dues there!" Well, I guess that note of levity was the wrong thing.

Woodbridge: What year was this?

Steilberg: About six or eight years ago.

Woodbridge: They were going to buy it from the Hearst estate?

Steilberg: No. Hearst was giving it to them. A lot of it would have to be replaced. To me it was wonderful to see how they did this work, and I learned something about the use of timber there, after all these centuries. They didn't use a round peg in a round hole; they used a square peg in a round hole, so it would never decay because there was ventilation through there. Those old boys knew their stuff, from dear experience, you see. I hadn't known that, and I've done a lot of reading on that subject, but I found it there.

V LOOKING FOR WORK

Arthur Brown

Woodbridge: When you got out of the University in 1910, what did you do?

Steilberg: I had been working in Mr. Howard's office in 1908 and 1909, and was still working in Mr. Howard's office in 1910 when the work ran out. I went out looking for work.

Woodbridge: How come the work ran out in his office?

Steilberg: The job that Mr. Howard had was finished, I guess.

Woodbridge: I was wondering, because I know that that's standard. At least when we came out here my husband went to work for one office until he finished that job, and then he went to work for another office.

Steilberg: Yes, that was the pattern, but nobody worried about it because you'd get a job in a day or so. Mr. Howard had given me a note to Arthur Brown. I went to see Arthur Brown and he was very nice to me. I haven't interviewed an applicant since that I haven't thought how decent Arthur Brown was to me. He was so encouraging and so decent. So whenever a trembling student comes in I try to ease his trembling a little.

Arthur Brown said to me, "I'm sorry we can't offer you anything here, and we haven't any prospects of it. I heard that Miss Morgan had some work; I suggest that you go and see her." I hadn't even heard of Miss Morgan. I looked a little startled and he said, "Don't fool yourself, young man. She's one of the best architects in this city. I don't know of any better. You just see if you can't get a job there. I suggest you go right now. It's nearly five o'clock and she'll be there until six if she's the way she was in Paris. I know she is good because I had to compete with her."

Steilberg: So I went to see Miss Morgan, and I went to work the next Monday.

Woodbridge: Arthur Brown didn't have any work at that moment, but he had quite a thriving practice, didn't he?

Steilberg: Well, that was afterwards. I think at that time he was doing a San Diego Santa Fe station, or something of that sort. His big boost came when he got the [San Francisco] city hall in competition, and then he got other work from that.

I saw one of Arthur Brown's first works that he won in a competition, the Berkeley City Hall.

Woodbridge: I was told by several people that actually John Bakewell was the more gifted designer of the two.

Steilberg: I don't know. I've never heard that. I doubt it, because John Bakewell was a man who nixed the American Institute of Architects' taking a stand on this stadium. I went to see him. I thought very highly of him. But I thought, "Boy, how a man who's supposed to be an architect can avoid going into that fight." He said it was controversial and I know what it was--they were all afraid of losing jobs, you know. These Board of Regents boys were really venomous at that time. They fired Mr. Howard when he was away, you know.

Woodbridge: When was that?

Steilberg: They had just finished the stadium--about 1923, I think.

A Year With Julia Morgan, 1910-1911

Woodbridge: Well, that's ahead of our story. Maybe we should go back to your beginning career with Miss Morgan in 1910. You started right in doing what?

Steilberg: She gave me a set of drawings; she gave me a plan and she told me to develop this that way. She was very explicit in her sketches. As I think I told you, she sketched with a T-square and a triangle.

Woodbridge: It's always interesting to know how a person approaches her work.

Steilberg: I remember we had a man who was a very talented draftsman--free-hand, very nice drawings. She heard about his work, and saw that he was talented in that way. She gave him a job to draw up this plan--I saw the plan--and he drew up some sketches. She came in hurriedly and took the whole thing and went to see the clients that afternoon. In the course of presenting it to the clients she saw that he had drawn a stairway in there that could not be ascended, except on your hands and knees, or with a rope to help you up. When she came back to the office, she said, "Well, young man, I can't deal with fiction writers."

You couldn't monkey around with the facts of life; she felt very strongly about that. She said that a lot of the bad architecture we have is because people get themselves in a jam and then they twist themselves around to get something to get out of the jam. She felt you ought to face the facts from the beginning, and that's the way she was.

In your book somewhere you refer to me as her "chief draftsman for many years."* That was not true.**There was no "chief draftsman" in Miss Morgan's office. She would take a job to a man and tell him what she wanted; usually this was a plan and then just a suggestion of what the elevation should be. She was liberal about it. If you wanted to sketch, that was all right.

I knew what she was after, so I usually sketched with a T-square and triangle like she did. I didn't fool myself; I can sketch with a T-square and triangle just as well as I can the other way, and since that's what you're dealing with anyway I didn't see that it was any great handicap. Many of the sketches I presented I just made over what was in effect preliminary working drawings. And it saved a lot of time, too, believe me. I think she probably had as efficient an office as I've ever been in.

Woodbridge: Did she encourage people to work in this way?

Steilberg: No, whatever they wanted to do, but she cracked down on them whenever they brought up a work of "fiction."

Woodbridge: What years were you in her office?

Steilberg: I went in first in 1910, and I worked there until 1911.

*A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California, by Woodbridge et al., Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1973, p. 257.

**Neither was "for many years" true, as the chronology of this transcript will show. Because W.T.S. acted frequently--out of his own office--as structural engineer for J.M., the myth of extended draftsmanship status has grown up among laymen. - H.L. (See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.)

A Year in Santa Barbara

Steilberg: Then I went to Santa Barbara and worked down there until the fall of 1912. That's where I met Mr. George Owen Knapp [sic]. I worked for an architect who was primarily a socialite architect. He was a very nice fellow, and he had good taste and all that, but he very rarely approached the drafting board. Most of his time was spent in the field, you know.

George Owen Knapp was the president of the People's Gas Company in Chicago. We got along fine. I guess we understood each other because we were both long-distance dreamers, and so were Mr. Hearst and Miss Morgan, and also Armand Mercier. People who belong to that breed don't think about anything but their work. It's not a virtue; it's just that they're made that way, that's all. As the dear old Frenchman said, "These northern people are so damn righteous about everything. A Frenchman does it because he likes it."

Woodbridge: Did you have a commission from Mr. Knapp?

Steilberg: No, but he gave me better than a commission. I met him out at the house one time, and I told him I was going to leave. They were putting up mahogany surrounding a big fireplace, and they were fussing around a sort of a little boxing-in at the end of the fireplace. I said to the carpenter who was working on it, "I don't think there's much sense in making a cabinet there..." [inaudible]...we were using souse hinges, you know--piano-type hinges.

Mr. Knapp spoke up and said, "I don't know, I thought I might use that for putting in musical instruments, or something like that." I said, "It's going to be costly," and I could see Mr. Knapp sort of bridle, and I saw his lips move, "Impudent puppy." Then he said --he always called me Mr. Steilberg--"You know, Mr. Steilberg, I thought it might be a nice place to store some of those beautiful drawings you made for the guidance of Mr. Quenzel, the woodcarver." Just driving in the knife and turning it, you know. Then he said, "No, I know it will cost too much."

Woodbridge: How did you happen to think of going to Santa Barbara?

Steilberg: Mr. Ray was the architect, and he came up and was looking for help. I was getting, I think, twenty dollars a week, and he offered thirty, and Miss Morgan said, "For goodness sakes, take it."

Woodbridge: Did you like Santa Barbara at the time?

Steilberg: Very much. To continue with Mr. Knapp: he had me to dinner that night, and he gave me a check for \$500 for leaving, which at that time was twice as much as the round trip steamer fare to Europe for two people. It pushed my trip to Europe ahead by about six months, and the consequence was that I was in Paris when the war broke.

Europe: Great Buildings, and Disillusionments

Woodbridge: When you were travelling in Europe, before the "happening" of the war, what were you looking at in particular?

Steilberg: You might say that I remembered and had an outline from my history books; I went to see what were the great buildings.

Woodbridge: Were you surprised?

Steilberg: Yes, I was. What surprised me the most then, and again afterwards, was that the buildings which had followed what you might call a classic scale were in Italy and in France, especially in Rome and southward. As soon as you got the Teutons moving in up north, the scale goes way down. You'd think these larger guys would have wanted something [large]. In Sweden, for instance, I never was so disappointed in my life as I was in this Swedish town hall, which looked magnificent in pictures--and they're careful to keep a man out of sight--but it looks like a child's house when you see it. It was shocking!

The scale in Rome, you know, is big and powerful. One of the great examples of that, one that turned me away from staying in New York when I first went to Europe, was realizing that I had seen New York City Hall, and how much finer that was, and how much nobler than the Woolworth Building, which was the rage at the time. Every architect in the country was running in to see the Woolworth Building. Of course, City Hall didn't get mentioned at all. But if you look at it today, you see that the New York City Hall, with the street arch going through it, will be good for another thousand years.

Woodbridge: I suppose at that time that commercial building was beginning to be a very different thing.

Steilberg: Yes, it was to be reckoned with.

Woodbridge: In Europe, yes, but even more so in the United States.

Steilberg: Yes. In German they say "Himmelkratzer"-- heaven scratcher.

Woodbridge: Did you pursue your love of medieval buildings in Europe?

Steilberg: Yes, I did. I still have it.

Woodbridge: Did you come back burning with any ideas?

Steilberg: I was thoroughly disillusioned about the possibility of reviving medieval architecture in the United States because I saw that the men who had given their lives to it--and they were very competent men, like Cambridge [sic] and Ferguson [sic]--were complete flops, I thought, after seeing the real thing. I feel that the essential difference is that they tried to do everything on the drafting board. All of what used to be fine carving, designed personally, was just as cold as cast iron. You just can't do it. You can't take all the pleasure away from the craftsman and expect him to do any work of art. It's just common sense.

Woodbridge: A great deal of the so-called Gothic revival architecture is purely academic, really. It's not lively.

Steilberg: No, it's not anything like the original. You can realize that if you read in the chronicles of the time that the architect was a master mason, and he knew his masonry. You take the much-admired building of Frank Lloyd Wright over in San Francisco--any mason would hide his face in shame at that miserable brickwork there.* It does everything that a good brickmason would never do--that is, raked out square joints, and just a place for the water to dump and go in. Any structural man cringes whenever he goes through that archway. Here is an arch coming half way over, and then some miserable little window mullions continuing; it's about as phony a piece of construction as you can find.

Woodbridge: I think Wright had a lot of phony construction.

Steilberg: When the American Institute of Architecture published their memorial on the Tokyo Hotel, they admitted it all.

Woodbridge: Except the Tokyo Hotel did stand up through the earthquake.

*140 Maiden Lane.

Steilberg: Well, not very well, for this reason: if this [refers to drawing] stood through an earthquake it wouldn't be remarkable; but if this were twice this high, it would be remarkable. It was all low to the ground. Many other buildings in Tokyo gave a better performance.

The thing that is little known is that he built a swimming pool and they had to fill it with sand because when they started to empty it of water, the tide was going to lift it right out of the floor. That's been done! It's happened in several places in Honolulu. The people came out and there had been a high tide and here their pools were up out of the ground. They emptied them, you see, to clean them. So when I designed swimming pools over there, I put a good dead weight of concrete at the bottom.

Returning to Mr. Howard for a moment, I remember what he said when I went to Venice for the first time. I had a list of buildings he had mentioned as worthwhile, and I looked them up, and sat and admired them, and made sketches of some of them--parts of them. But he had also said that Venice is a city of facades. Everything is on the grand canal, and if you get off the grand canal you are in a picturesque but ordinary Italian village. The facades are on the canal. And that's true. I didn't realize it fully until years later when I went a second time on my own to Europe in 1926. He said, "When you go to Europe, look carefully at the buildings in Genoa. They are some of the most masterly solutions of the hillside architecture problem that you'll find in Europe." And I found that to be true.*

Woodbridge: He knew Europe very well.

Steilberg: Oh, yes. He was very much a scholar. He may have gotten the reputation--I think entirely wrongly--of having been over there a great deal. From his scholarliness he could talk of things, and people would just look dumb and go blank and not be interested.

1914, A Job on a Mill

Woodbridge: When you came back from Europe, what did you do then?

Steilberg: For the first two weeks I picked apples! I needed a job; I was

*The challenge of relating a building harmoniously to a hilly site remained a delight to W.T.S. throughout his life, both in his own designs and in his later career as a structural consultant. - H.L. (See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.)

Steilberg: broke. Will Corlett again came to my rescue, as he has so many times. His father-in-law, Mr. Doty, was building a little mill in San Francisco. All the architectural work was completed; the buildings were all done by the time I got back at the end of '14. This little mill was supplying the sash for one of these enormous buildings. They used acres of it, you know. He asked me to detail it and determine the number of pieces of the other; it was just sort of a take-off job that any careful high school boy could have done.

In this they had to simulate a lot of what they thought was Roman work; they had a lot of windows with diagonals going through them. In the Roman work, that had been done in marble, and then it had been cut out in one chunk of marble as big as this, and then set up there. This, of course, was all in wood--very good wood, but still it was wood--so it had all this problem of joinery.

The specification writer must have been onto his job, because he wrote that if the contractor so elects he can have the glass run right through, and put a hole through the glass--which is easy enough to do with a drill, if you're careful--and thence the strips could simply be put across there and screwed together right through the hole. I drew it up that way. It had been shown the other way; this was just in specifications.

Mr. Doty came around and said, "That won't do, you know. Those will all have to be joined together this way; you have to provide for that in the section--all the detail you left, the crossing of the strips."

I said, "Well, Mr. Doty, the specifications say that we can do it this way."

He chewed his moustache a little and said, "Well, young fellah, this is a first in building construction. I have never before known anyone to save money by reading the specifications. You know, we usually put in a little allowance--a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand, as the case may be--for the damned specifications, because they always make trouble for us. You can have a job anytime you want."

VI JULIA MORGAN [1]

Steilberg: Right after that Miss Morgan found out I was working on the mill, so she gave me a job and I worked there for about two years, until war was declared in 1917.

Woodbridge: What was she doing at that time?

Steilberg: We had a job in Marysville. She did a school there, and the Rideout house, and the Hextor house. There were several others too. It was residence work. I don't think there was anything other than residences, except for one or two schools. And she did some schools over in Oakland that have since been torn down.

Woodbridge: How did she get into school work?

Steilberg: I don't know. Her family was well set up in Oakland. I don't think they were wealthy people, but they were a well-established family. They had a nice house and all of that. She had relatives in New York who were architects. I can't think of their names.* I knew many of them, but I don't think they ever came out here.

Woodbridge: She got schools first in Oakland, through her family connections?

Steilberg: I think so; that's possible.

Woodbridge: She did a number of schools, didn't she?

Steilberg: Yes. She did these three schools in Oakland. They were a group. Instead of making one colossal school in a residential neighborhood, she made three smaller schools. She had the same respect for neighborhoods when she did St. John's and kept the cross off the top of it.

Woodbridge: In this period during the war, before the U.S. became involved...

Steilberg: Actually she kept me busy for two months, I think, taking photographs of all of her things.

*Le Brun. - S.R.

Woodbridge: I wonder what happened to all those photographs?

Steilberg: I don't know. They were all published in the Architect and Engineer. I took practically all of those photographs with a Rodenstock camera.

Woodbridge: You published the article in 1918?

Steilberg: Yes. I wrote the article and she was displeased with it. I think her only comment was, "The building should speak for itself."

Woodbridge: Did she know you were publishing an article?

Steilberg: Not that. She knew I was making the pictures and she approved of the titles of the pictures, but the editor--Mr. Jones, or something like that--persuaded me to write [the article]. I think what took his fancy was my quotation of Mr. Howard about medieval domestic architecture. I don't know whether you remember that: "The medieval castle, and later the medieval town, was located, designed, and constructed to keep out some of the wind, most of the rain, and all of the neighbors." That delighted Mr. Jones. It didn't delight Miss Morgan; she thought this was so trivial. But that's a direct quote from John Galen Howard.

Woodbridge: Her work was published from time to time, wasn't it?

Steilberg: Very little. I don't know of any before that, and very little since. Once in a while the Berkeley Gazette would get out some spread on it.

Woodbridge: She actually did not want the work published?

Steilberg: No, she didn't care anything about it. And what really made her angry, I think--she never said so to me, but I could just see that she was--was when someone would publish something, as they did about the Berkeley Women's Club: "This club is my pearl," or something like that. She would have been very likely to say something like, "The hell it is." She just didn't have any patience with that sort of going around and patting yourself on the back.

Woodbridge: I have the impression that she regarded each job as the important one. There was no rating of priorities.

Steilberg: That was it. Her thought, which she might even have expressed,

Steilberg: was: "Some people might have said that I am a shrewd business-woman. I don't think I am, but I am smart enough to know that it's very poor policy to say that one child is better than another child. It's not decent."

Woodbridge: Did she look upon certain commissions as more important than others?

Steilberg: I don't know. There was this strange comradeship with Mr. Hearst, and it was really genuine comradeship.

Woodbridge: How did she meet Mr. Hearst?

Steilberg: Through his mother. I think she had met him before 1919. I think she may have made some studies in 1918. I was not in the office at that time. I was wasting government money on shipyards over here.

(That was a colossal folly of the war if there ever was one. We built eight of these launching ways to take ships nine hundred feet long, and if they ever had built a ship nine hundred feet long, it would have jumped up on the shore on the opposite side. The channel was only about seven hundred feet wide--absolutely crazy. I was in the construction work there; I had the stuffy title of Chief Structural Draftsman. We had thirty or forty men working on these things, and they were doing the silliest things. [This was for] the Munson and Johnson Company [sic], a subsidiary of Bethlehem.)

Woodbridge: Why did you leave Miss Morgan's office?

Steilberg: There was no work.

Woodbridge: So you went to work for Munson and Johnson.

Steilberg: Yes. Then, after the war, I went back to Miss Morgan, in late 1918.

Woodbridge: Did people run out of work at that time because of the war?

Steilberg: Yes. There was no building then, unless they were "in" with the military.

Woodbridge: Did architects then go to work for other concerns at that time?

Steilberg: Yes.

Phoebe Apperson Hearst, Pleasanton

Woodbridge: I understand that Julia Morgan did work for Mrs. Hearst in Pleasanton on the hacienda. How did she happen to get to do that?

Steilberg: I think on the recommendation of Mrs. Hearst.

Woodbridge: How did she meet Mrs. Hearst?

Steilberg: Mrs. Hearst was not a feminist, but she was interested in women's clubs and that sort of thing. I know that she largely mothered one of the girls' clubs here--the Rediviva Club, I think it was--and I think she financed them for quite a while.

Woodbridge: She was interested in organizational things that were run by women?

Steilberg: Yes, she was, without ever being belligerent about it. She was a wonderful person; you could see it. I saw her on the podium at various University meetings.

Woodbridge: Do you know what she did on the hacienda in Pleasanton?

Steilberg: No, I don't know, and I've never been in that building.

Woodbridge: It burned some years ago, but I wondered if anyone knew what Julia Morgan had contributed. There were already some buildings standing.

Steilberg: She would have respected Schweinfurth's work, because she thought highly of the Unitarian Church. Also, there was a house in North Berkeley that Schweinfurth did.

Woodbridge: The Moody house?

Steilberg: I guess it is. It's illustrated in that book of The Simple Home. An ordinary architect would have filled up the creek, but he made a bridge over it.

Charles Keeler

Woodbridge: Did you know Charles Keeler?

Steilberg: Yes, very well.

Woodbridge: He was apparently a very profound influence in many ways.

Steilberg: He was a man of many talents. He was one of the first to recognize Mr. Maybeck's genius. The fact that he wrote The Simple Home shows he was recognizing the virtues of these things long before anyone paid any attention to them. And there was perhaps more than the craftsman's magazine type of thing--much more, I think.

Woodbridge: In what way?

Steilberg: Well, in being well planned. You look at Mr. Maybeck's jobs. You haven't seen the house of Mrs. Price, have you? That is, I think, one of Mr. Maybeck's masterpieces. It's one of his early works.

Woodbridge: Where is it?

Steilberg: 23 Panoramic Way.

Woodbridge: Is that the house that has x-bracing?

Steilberg: Yes, it has x-bracing on the outside. It's a very wonderful piece of work. I think it is one of the things they should preserve as an historical monument in Berkeley. It would be a wonderful place for a kindergarten.

Woodbridge: Was Charles Keeler influenced by Maybeck in writing this book? Or was it mutual?

Steilberg: I think it was pretty much mutual. They were both what would be called "nuts" today. Charles Keeler was quite a naturalist too. Keeler, the man who founded the Sierra Club, John Muir, and Burroughs were part of the [Edward H.] Harriman Alaska expedition in 1899. I have the expedition volume; there's beautiful writing in it. Keeler wrote part of it. And he's written a book on birds--it's called Bird Notes Afield--which is very good. It was published by Paul Elder. Keeler was quite a wonderful person. I liked him very much. Another book published by Paul Elder at

Steilberg: the same time was Nature and Science on the Pacific Coast, which Keeler contributed to. The one on birds is a little bit artsy-craftsy in the binding, you know, but...

Woodbridge: I always thought that books of that time were probably handmade. I know William Keith was a great friend of his, wasn't he?

Steilberg: Yes, I think so. Keith did some very wonderful paintings, though I didn't think they were as skilled as some of the other artists and watercolorists.

Woodbridge: Was Keeler a man of independent means?

Steilberg: Not at all. I think he had to scratch for a living.

Woodbridge: But he preferred to do what he wanted to do?

Steilberg: Yes. He lost his head completely at the time of the Berkeley fire.

The whole city was in a blaze over there. It looked as if the blazes were coming right over the campus, you know. I have some pictures of it. We were told to get out of our house--the wind might change at just the right moment.

I saw him when I came back from the city. (I heard the alarm, so I came home as fast as I could. At that time, there was no bridge, just the ferry, so it took a while.) He was standing at the corner of College and Bancroft, just waving his hands and shouting, "Go south, you poor people. Get out of Berkeley. Berkeley is lost." The Berkeley that he loved so much was going.

Mr. Hearst and His Architect

Woodbridge: To get back to Miss Morgan and Mr. Hearst, would you tell that anecdote about your being in the office and Mr. Hearst coming?

Steilberg: I've told it so many times--Twice Told Tales, Thrice Told Tales [laughs]. I was at my table, after five o'clock--I often worked late because it was interesting work, whatever it was. I heard this voice, which I had heard before, but I didn't realize what a high pitch Mr. Hearst's voice had. For such a large man, it

Steilberg: seemed to me his pitch was very high, so it carried.

I heard him say to Miss Morgan, "I would like to build something up on the hill at San Simeon. I get tired of going up there and camping in tents. I'm getting a little old for that. I'd like to get something that would be more comfortable. The other day I was in Los Angeles, prowling around second-hand book stores, as I often do, and I came upon this stack of books called Bungalow Books. Among them I saw this one which has a picture--this isn't what I want, but it gives you an idea of my thought about the thing, keeping it simple--of a Jappo-Swisso bungalow." He laughed at that, and so did she.

Every time I've gone by it or flown over it, I've thought, "Well, there's the Jappo-Swisso bungalow."

Woodbridge: Did they sit right down then and work on the ideas?

Steilberg: No. I sketched something for her the next day, I think. There is that sketch at San Simeon. (A man at San Luis Obispo College, in the architecture department there, found the drawing, just from my description of it.)

It started out as facade architecture. That was the trouble. It didn't give Miss Morgan and me a real chance to use her real talents as a planner. She was like a man playing the piano backwards.

San Simeon, Plans, Excavations, Details

Woodbridge: I have seen the drawings for San Simeon--the various stages of drawings of the facade, and the various drawings of the guest-house A and the guesthouse B--and it's clear that they progressed from very simple bungalow types to the very fancy thing. I wonder if you would comment on the progression.

Steilberg: Well, it quickly became apparent that Mr. Hearst wanted something grand. I don't think it was a month before we were going on the grand scale.

Woodbridge: In other words, the first drawings, the simple ones, didn't last any time at all.

Steilberg: No, two or three weeks or a month at most, I would say.

Woodbridge: The first things that were more or less thoroughly planned were the guesthouses, is that right? And they were the first things constructed?

Steilberg: Yes. The first construction came about in this way: The general scheme was evolved very soon of a big master house. He wanted that to dominate the group. Then the three houses--A, B, and C--were guesthouses. I went down with Walter Huber, who was chief engineer for Miss Morgan and who did all of her structural steel work. I did almost all of Miss Morgan's concrete and timber work.

When we were there we browsed around on the hillside and rode around on horseback--I hadn't been on a horse for many years--and looked at some outcroppings of rock with which we could make aggregate for concrete.

Well, then they were starting to do a little digging for the basement of the main house. Walter Huber was quite a geologist, as well as a structural engineer, and he looked at these specimens with his geologist's glass--specimens, that is, from that excavation, and also from some of the rocky outcroppings we had seen on our ride. He said, "You know, I think it might be well to just make some test cylinders of this stuff that we're just digging right out of the hole there where the house is to be. There's a possibility that might be good enough."

So we had the cylinders made, tested them, and the concrete made from the outcroppings we had intended to use did not have nearly as good compressive stress as the concrete that was made from the excavation for the house, which was right there. Huber showed me why it was. I had been interested in that sort of thing in college. He said, "Well, you see, it's this fracture of the stuff we got from the outcroppings is flinty; the cement mortar doesn't adhere to it. The slippage, you'll notice, is on that. The result is there's good adhesion, so that the particles of rock have a chance to work." So that's the way it was done.

Woodbridge: So you used the actual excavation rock for the aggregate.

Steilberg: More than that, we looked for that kind of rock, a sandstone rock, rather than a flinty or igneous rock.

Woodbridge: The house was excavated at the same time the construction was going on on the guesthouses.

Steilberg: Actually, he excavated a little before. It was modified and added to, of course--the wings put on there, and everything else. I checked on the houses as the excavations were made to see how close we were to the drawings, to see that the slopes that we had shown on our drawings were what was really on the job. I came across one of those drawings not long ago--I still have it, I think--and it was a little less than what we had shown on the drawings, so it wasn't necessary to modify anything at all.

I did have a problem there: I designed the structures of the guesthouses--well, there were some additions made, but, I mean, as they were first built I designed those structures in their entirety. There were problems there to keep moisture out of them, you see, because that hillside was just peppered with springs. So those walls were all very carefully waterproofed. Then came the problem of dangling on this ornament on the outside. I often wished that there had been an earthquake severe enough to shake all the ornament off, but that's what Mr. Hearst wanted.

Woodbridge: As the ornament was added, did Miss Morgan draw up the ornament as it came? She was the one, she detailed all...

Steilberg: Yes, it was all detailed--detailed too much. That was the trouble, I think.

Woodbridge: But it was her hand that did it?

Steilberg: Yes. Well, it was the hand of the people in her office, but she gave them the general design of it. But, as I say, it was too much defined, so that there was no fire of creation in it at all.

Woodbridge: Who were the particular people in the office who worked on it?

Steilberg: Well, Thaddeus Joy--and he did wonderful drawings...

Woodbridge: He was principally her ornament-detailer, wasn't he?*

Steilberg: Yes, yes. He did beautiful drawings, but the only trouble was he had all the fun of it, you see; the poor craftsman didn't get anything out of it. I don't know if it was just copying that...Well, that just doesn't go.

Woodbridge: Who found the craftsmen to execute the work?

*Thaddeus Joy was a partner, with his name on Julia Morgan's door, at this period; he also had large supervisory duties during the building of San Simeon. - H.L. (See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.)

Steilberg: Well, there were a lot of them in Los Angeles then, you see. Los Angeles had a lot of good craftsmen because they were there for the movies, doing...

Woodbridge: Sure, phony Spanish architecture sets. So did Mr. Hearst just bring these people in?

Steilberg: Yes, and paid them top salaries, you know.

Woodbridge: For instance, if she had done a sketch, which she then gave to Thaddeus Joy, and he detailed it, then...

Steilberg: He detailed it at full size, with a drawing as big as this table.

Woodbridge: I wonder what happened to those drawings.

Steilberg: I don't know. It's interesting, because I've looked in vain for the detailed drawings of the Campanile, which would be of such great value. The shop drawings are all gone.

"Long Distance Dreamers"

Woodbridge: You told me a story once of when Miss Morgan went to Europe... What year was this?

Steilberg: I'm not sure, 1929, something like that. At any rate, when her ship arrived in Naples, Mr. Hearst had sent one of his cars there with a chauffeur, and he was to take her wherever she wished in Europe for as long as she was to be there.

Woodbridge: I think you did sort of summarize your feelings about their relationship.

Steilberg: In one way they were similar--they were long distance dreamers. There's a picture that I just happened to come across in The Best of Life (a series of pictures from Life magazine), a picture of Oppenheimer and Einstein. Now, it may seem like a far-fetched comparison, but it's just the same thing. It's telepathy, you might say--a lot of communication without any words at all.

Woodbridge: Did they speak of other subjects besides his building projects,

Woodbridge: or was that the substance of their...

Steilberg: I wasn't within earshot [laughs], but I think it was all that.

Woodbridge: It was all talking shop...

Steilberg: Yes, talking shop. It was very intense shop, though.

Woodbridge: Did Mr. Hearst continually "meddle" in the design, as it were?

Steilberg: Well, he did take great interest in it. There were things that he bought from time to time that just had to be used. I never ceased to regret all those suspended life-sized statues in the ceiling, you know. They looked as if they would plummet down on you at any time.

Woodbridge: Heavens, I didn't realize...that's in the main house?

Steilberg: In the main dining room. And then the figures to either side of the door in the office, we called the Abominable Snowmen, you know.

Woodbridge: What did Miss Morgan think of this "overloading," because it couldn't have been in line with her taste?

Steilberg: No, as I said before, Miss Morgan and Mr. Hearst had this in common--they were both long-distance dreamers. That didn't mean that they necessarily had the same dreams, but they were looking way, way ahead. He was looking ahead to this being a museum of Renaissance art. And remember, he got his ideas of Renaissance art from the time of Lucchi's History of Art [sic].

And at that time the Apollo Belvedere was in every school-hall in the country, and it's an abominable piece of sculpture when you compare it to the real thing, you know. It's all right, but it isn't first class sculpture.

She was trying to lead him away into something better in art history. That was her idea about getting this monastery...

Woodbridge: That was her idea?

Steilberg: Well, it was Byne's idea, who was selling the thing.* I don't say she egged him on, but she said, "This is a fine piece of work, and I think it would be a fine thing for you to use it at Wyntoon and have a medieval museum there." He apparently fell in love with


*Arthur Byne, of Madrid, art historian and--on a grand scale--art dealer. - H.L.

A letter to Walter Steilberg from Julia Morgan

P.S. This letter is just a scrabble of comments--don't think I've lost all ideas of continuity! but time tonight would not allow more elegance--& so,

Oct 7th 1928
(1927?)

Dear Walter,

Your German volume was a great surprise this morning--so interesting I had to stop off this evening and take it in. I would say that on a small scale, you have used almost all the main ideas and forms (except I'd not agree on the  form, i.e., the parabolism), but some way the effect of it all is a sort of feeling of dread and almost horror--much what passing through Pittsburg industrial district--or Stubenberg [?] produces upon me. Which sounds like ingratitude, but is not--what huge organizations! I know we have as large, but this brings so much to your eye at one time.

Am enclosing a very nice letter from Ed Hussey--also a copy of a letter to a YW "publicity" who had written for plans of the Honolulu Bldg for "Architecture," whose editors had secured their own photos from some source or other but wanted data, notes on construction, etc., for what was promised as quite a complete presentation. I wish such articles could wait "Seasoning." Miss Chamm [?] is back from her world tour --BJ [Bjarne Dahl] writes he wants to come home. LEF [Lefeaver] made a good clean job and while it was not welcomed, I believe our "interference" with Island ways has been forgiven. TJ [Thaddeus Joy] has had to spend considerable time at SS [San Simeon] on account of Mr. Rossi's not having been friendly of late--and I've had to keep Hathaway Lovell there as a companion to TJ to keep him from getting dispirited. The pool water is beautifully clear and of lovely color. I saw the Santa Monica pool last week, and the Hill water was better. The S.M. pool has had to have all its piping system and water supply increased as it took about 3 days to empty and fill! It's quite pretty and gay--the bridge not bad. The tennis court has no cover and no one misses it. Flowers are all around on top of the piling in boxes and they are doing well. The whole place looks better than I ever thought possible, but is a sad waste of good money in the last analysis--Also the Carpenter Bros. got careless financially and had to be removed. We are finishing up from here, now, as a matter of accomodation.

The Hill work goes on--all real Manti stone now from toe to last upstanding hair. In some ways you must know it--But I have a sneaking suspicion it is coming out pretty well in spite of everything. The fruit crop is wonderful. grapes, peaches, plums,

figs, avocados, lemons, oranges, grapefruit, apples, pomegranate, in abundance. Also 3 more pools--I wished you had been here for the Gym Tennis court (A new Building since you left) construction. I needed your cooperative eye--could see what it could look like but could not get it over.

The columbarium is just stripped and is most suggestive in its rough outlines--pity to spoil it.

My mother is stronger in body and mind--quite herself as to keenness--but is confined to bed--or at most a small voyage around her room. She is cheerful and never complains--I tell her of your cards and she enjoys them.

I saw in a newsreel movie a bit of the "Fete des Vignerons"--the cards and folders covering which we all have so much appreciated. I loved [?] Vevey and all the lovely lake towns--My, but I'd like to resee it all with these eyes--Thank you again for all the kind remembrance. Give our best greetings to your family--

Sincerely, Julia Morgan

D.S.
This letter is just a scrawl of comments -
don't think I've lost ~~the~~ all ideas of a
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allow of more elegance - O.S.

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 I needed your co-junctive eye -
 could see what it could look like
 but could not get it over.

The Columbian is just shipped &
 is most suggestive in its rough
 outlines - pity to spoil it -

JULIA MORGAN
 ARCHITECT
 MERCHANTS EXCHANGE
 SAN FRANCISCO

My mother is stronger in
 body & mind - quite herself
 as Pt. Kennedy - but is confined
 to bed - or at most a small
 voyage around her room. She
 is cheerful & never complains - I tell
 her of your cards & she enjoys
 them -

I saw in a news reel movie a
 bit of the "Fête des Vignerons" - the
 cards & folder covering which we all
 have so much appreciated - I loved
 very & all the lovely lake towns -
 but did not like to see it all
 with these eyes - Thank you again
 for all the kind remembrance. Give our
 best greetings to your family - Sincerely
 Julia Morgan.

Steilberg: that. Neither of them had any notion, nor did I, that the Depression was on, because that was three years after the collapse on Wall Street. Wall Street meant nothing to me, and apparently it meant nothing to Mr. Hearst.

Woodbridge: I remember you commented several times to me that she felt that she was building a museum in building San Simeon. She wasn't building a residence.

Steilberg: Yes, she told me that herself. She said, "Of course, this is just temporary for his use. The country needs architectural museums, not just places where you hang paintings and sculptures."

Woodbridge: There are no end of stories about his moving fireplaces, and moving...

Steilberg: Well, I can vouch for one story about moving a fireplace in house C because I was there. The fireplace had been located on the long side of one of the living rooms. He came in, and I was there when he said, "No, I don't like it there. Take it out and move it over here."

Woodbridge: It was already in place?

Steilberg: It was all built! Chimney going clear up to the roof, and everything, and the foundation went to hell and gone down the hillside.

I was also there when, six months later, Hearst said, "No, that was a mistake. We shouldn't have moved it from where it was. Take it out of there and put it back where it was." I think he enjoyed it like a small boy, in a way. I think in some ways he was kind of childish.

Woodbridge: You told me another story about when you were standing once with the clerk of the works, I guess. It was the story about the trees.

Steilberg: Oh, yes. That was Mr. Washburn. We were walking out along the edge of the road there that circled the hill at that time. Mr. Hearst stopped rather abruptly and said, not paying much attention to me--he thought Washburn was the guy that was doing everything (he did, as a matter of fact)--"You see that tree there? I want it moved about a hundred feet that way. And this one I want moved a hundred and fifty feet this way. And I want this one turned so that the big branch comes over the roadway."

Steilberg: I looked at Washburn, and Washburn looked at me. Gosh, those tree trunks were as big as this, you know. Washburn shook his head, and I shook mine, and I said, "Well, I could design a sort of a colossal concrete flower box with holes through the walls, so that it would drain properly, and maybe you can some way or other put it on rollers and get enough cables and power up there to move it."

Washburn said, "All right. I'll go down to Cambria and see if I can find some miners who would be willing to risk their necks doing it."

So I designed this thing, and they did move it. It lived for a time, anyway. I've heard that it since died; I don't know.

I was there when they were just getting it ready to go. The concrete flower pot, you might call it, was at least fifteen to twenty feet in diameter, with six-inch thick concrete walls, and the holes came through it. At that time, with carpenters' wages only five dollars a day, it cost \$8,000 for that one moving. The second moving, we had learned our tricks a little better, and that was done for \$5,000. I'd say that would be virtually, at the present time, ten times that.

Woodbridge: You told me a story once that I thought was a very good one for the record, about the fact that when Miss Morgan was at dinner, even though there might be these other glamorous people...

Steilberg: I was coming to that. She sat directly across from Hearst, and they were talking back and forth, and gesturing, and he was drawing things, and she was drawing things. The rest of us could have been a hundred miles away; they didn't pay any attention to anybody. It wouldn't have surprised me at all to see a spark travelling from one skull to the other, back and forth, because those two very different people just clicked.

Woodbridge: I guess he had an enormous long table.

Steilberg: There were forty people at that dinner. Marion Davies was very much in evidence. She was a charming hostess, and how she managed to steer these half-drunk bums around there and keep the peace, I don't know. She was a very nice and very pleasant person.

Woodbridge: I remember you commented once you thought she was much abused.

Steilberg: I think--this is just my version. I could never see why the

- Steilberg: Hearst family just completely severed all speaking to her, I guess. I don't know. I'm sure that if they used their heads a little they would have realized that Mr. Hearst's devotion to Marion Davies may have been a species of treason to their mother, but, on the other hand, he wasn't just attracted to Marion Davies as a body. She was a very keen, sympathetic mind. She had a lot of charm other than just physical charm, and I'm sure that's true of most of these so-called mistresses. I think most of them who have any great hold over their victims, if you want to call them that, are women with a lot more than just physical appeal.
- Woodbridge: In the course of working on San Simeon, did you live down there for a while?
- Steilberg: No, I never lived at San Simeon. I spent a few nights there, but I never lived there.
- Woodbridge: Did Miss Morgan stay down there, or did she go back and forth?
- Steilberg: She stayed sometimes. One of the guesthouses was made habitable before long and she stayed there.
- Woodbridge: About how long did it take to get the guesthouses habitable?
- Steilberg: Oh, I think a year or two, something like that. We had to get sash from England, you know, and tile from here and there. A lot of stuff was very expensive to get.
- Woodbridge: About how often did she go down there?
- Steilberg: Sometimes it would be every week, for a while, but usually you might say, in general, about every other week--about average that, I think.
- Woodbridge: She did this over a period of how long?
- Steilberg: I don't know. It must have been eight years, anyway.
- Woodbridge: As the work progressed and as things became complete and were built, did she register various opinions about how it was going or how she felt about it?
- Steilberg: No, I never heard her say much about that. I think she was battling all the time to keep it within bounds.

Some Other Work of the Morgan Office

Woodbridge: About how many years were you involved in San Simeon?

Steilberg: I started going back and forth early in 1919. I was doing that quite often for five or six years. And at the same time, just as Miss Morgan was busy on other projects, I was busy on other projects.

I left her office in 1922. I was by myself. Just as I was in the process of moving, she gave me a very nice job, which was the Pasadena YWCA. I did that while I was just getting my office set up. Right after that there was the Hollywood Studio Club, and the Margaret Baylor Inn in Santa Barbara, and a smaller wood frame building for the YWCA in San Diego, and the Salt Lake YW. A little later I got the Honolulu YW, which was another complicated one, and there was another building over there, a mortuary. The Berkeley Women's City Club was just coming up then [1925]. There was a lot of work going on, and that's the thing that amuses me about the biographer of Mr. Hearst speaking as if San Simeon were the only thing that Miss Morgan did.

I think that she did at least--if people can't take it on any other basis except arithmetically, just the square footage of other things that she did was quite as great as what she did at San Simeon. I mean in permanent construction, aside from all of this exaggeration and this ridiculous business of "thousands" of houses. That's nothing less than a slander; an architect like Julia Morgan doesn't do "thousands" of houses. That's done by a quantity producer, and she wasn't a quantity producer. There were two groups of houses that were repeated, but that's all that I can think of.

Woodbridge: Yes, I remember you said the group of houses on Parker Street and another group on Derby.

Steilberg: But that's all that I know of. If one wanted to do it--and if I had the money, I'd go out and do it myself--I'd just take and count the building permits. I'd be willing to bet a hundred dollars to ten that there's not over two hundred houses.

Woodbridge: I think Richard Longstreth did that. But I think he did get up to around five hundred houses--in building permits, not standing. But that was over a long practice.

- Steilberg: Over her whole practice, I guess, because when she went into business they were already issuing building permits even in Berkeley. I'll have to ask Longstreth about that. I'd be amazed if there were more than five hundred, because as she turned out her drawings--her set of plans--there were always at least eight or ten drawings. You can't do those in a few hours, you know--not if they are studied the way hers were.
- Woodbridge: How large would you say her office was at the largest?
- Steilberg: Well, she had people working at the same time in San Simeon and in San Francisco, and sometimes one or two in Chicago or in New York. She was doing work for the YWCA nationally, you see. Miss Joy* was in those offices, and I can't think of who else--Biersman [sic], I think, sometimes. But there was no engineering work done there that I know of. I don't think I've ever seen more than ten men in her office in San Francisco, and then it would be just for an emergency, just for a couple of days. Generally, there were about eight men, six or eight men. And that was a good-sized office in those days; using hundreds of men was just completely foreign [laughs].
- Woodbridge: Would those eight men be responsible for producing working drawings?
- Steilberg: Yes, they were all competent men. Sometimes we would have one or two apprentices, and we would lose money on them for a year, getting them into shape. Well, they needed to get into shape.
- Woodbridge: Then the San Simeon work went on in fits and starts a little bit, didn't it?
- Steilberg: Yes, it did. In general, I think you could say that San Simeon was about ten years in the active building up on the hill, and then there were possibly two or three years after that when there were additions made, such as the zoo building and the little buildings down on the coast. I think Miss Morgan had very little to do with those.
- Woodbridge: Then there were buildings and a hunting lodge nearby San Simeon.
- Steilberg: Yes, at Jolon, over where the mission is. She did some rehabilitation of the mission there--and the clubhouse over there, or something of that sort.

*Thaddeus Joy's sister, Alice. - H.L.

Woodbridge: Yes, there was a sort of a hunting lodge that she did.

Steilberg: She was responsible, I think, for getting the mission put in order. It was run down, with the roof leaking and all of that; it was on the way to ruin.

Woodbridge: So, it needed structural repairs, but not...

Steilberg: I don't think she made any additions. She was very careful about that.

VII CONSTRUCTION AT SAN SIMEON

Woodbridge: I think you told me that Mr. Hearst had a permanent staff that was in charge of construction, that stayed at San Simeon. About how many people were they?

Steilberg: They were under Miss Morgan's direction. They weren't his; he didn't engage them. We engaged them in the office in San Francisco. I had a good deal to do with engaging them. We paid more than the scale and offered good lodgings and food there.

Woodbridge: This must have been quite an attractive place to go.

Steilberg: It was. Of course, one of the troubles was--I don't know if this can be put into print, but still it's something you should know--many of the men would work for a few months, or even a year, and then get tired of having things torn down just at a whim, like the fireplaces: "Take that out of there, and put it over here," and that sort of thing. They felt that Hearst was just throwing his weight around, and I think that to some extent he was.

At any rate, they disliked it and they just quit. Some of them told me, "I can't stand that, doing the best I can on something, and then having someone just come and tear it down because he hasn't given it thought--hasn't even looked at it really hard the first time."

There were three first-rate superintendents who wore out on the job. Washburn wore out on it; he couldn't stand it any more. Rossi wore out on it. I think there was a third man that he had there who quit too because of this "whimsiness." That is hard for anyone to take; I've found it very hard myself.

Woodbridge: How many men did they have under them?

Steilberg: At the time that I was there, which was in the early twenties, there were, I should say, somewhere on the order of--it varied a good deal--from twenty to forty. That was quite a crew and they were highly paid. They were all craftsmen and trained construction men. What power tools they had, they had to have an expert set them up because they didn't know much about them [laughs].

It was something of a job to take care of the commissary. I organized that at first, at the first session up there, when I went down for the first meal, which you might say was of my own devising. I was worried about how it would go.

I had some excellent advice from Mr. Compton of Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco. It was then a much better restaurant than it is now, if it's still there; it was something like Mannings, you know? I think Mannings is a little better. Mr. Compton was very nice. He had been with the Santa Fe for years and had learned the tricks from the Santa Fe. He asked me into his office and I guess he talked to me for an hour, warning me about this and that.

He said, "For God's sake, be careful about the cornstarch! These crazy cooks that they have! You get the Kingsford's cornstarch. If you let the cooks get it for you, they'll get the cheapest thing they can get and everyone will get indigestion." [Laughs.] He said, "Always have plenty of canned fruit, sweet canned fruit, and be sure that your bread isn't too hard and tough. It's amazing how many of these workmen have poor teeth." And it's true. I used to see them nibble around--crusts all over the place--the very things I go after!

Woodbridge: Did most of the workmen come from San Francisco?

Steilberg: The Bay Region, yes. There were all kinds of craftsmen, you see--carpenters and concrete workers--and at that time there was still uncertainty about many of the details of concrete work too.

Woodbridge: You had done quite a bit of research, had you not, in concrete at that time?

Steilberg: Well, I wouldn't dignify it with the name of research. I had had a good deal of experience with it, and I had taken a good course with Derleth in college. He was a wonderful teacher. When I went to Alaska, years after that, I took a few handbooks, and the things that helped me most of all were my notes of Derleth's lectures. It was on the basis of that that I taught structural design to the

Steilberg: Seabees.

Woodbridge: What about the stone carvers, the people who had to do the ornaments?

Steilberg: A good deal of that was done, of course, in shops in Oakland. And a lot of it, unfortunately, was cast stone. Someday I'll show you a piece of sculpture that was done by a lady who was very talented, and it was done just while the cement was setting.* It was all done in less than two hours. It was a beautiful piece of work, but that's just the reason it was good; you just didn't have time to fiddle and fuss over it, like you do on a drawing. I've often wondered why they didn't do more of that.

Woodbridge: Perhaps they just didn't have the people who were skilled. There were no carvers?

Steilberg: No, not very many. There were some. Militant was one of them. He was a wonderful man. He was a Belgian sculptor. You can see some of his work up on the Campanile [U.C.]--the little bears on the side of that bench there are Militant's. He was a wonderful person.

I rode down the mountain with him one time and I thought that before I got down it would be my last ride [laughs]--it was the most reckless driving I ever saw. We drove down this twisty road, you know, and he suddenly said, "Oh, see the light on the lighthouse," and he pointed over to it just as we were about to go off of this track [sic]. He turned around and said, "Wasn't that wonderful?" [Laughs.] He came to his end most appropriately. He was a very fine violinist and he was playing a sonata--I don't know if it was Beethoven or Brahms, or who, but at any rate it was a very wonderful piece--and he dropped dead.

Woodbridge: I wasn't aware that cast stone... of course, one had to make a mold for the casting.

Steilberg: Yes; you make a mold, and then all those hundreds of brackets were all done in plaster, you see.

*The person referred to is Rowena Symmonds Steilberg, Walter T. Steilberg's first wife, who died in 1918. Much of the decorative sculpture on his early residences was done by her. - H.L.

Woodbridge: Was one person or one firm largely responsible for the molds?

Steilberg: I can't remember the name of the company that did it in Oakland, but they did a great deal of that stuff.

Woodbridge: Then it was done in Oakland?

Steilberg: Yes, and it was shipped down. As I told you, one of my worries was to hold all that tripe on the side of the building, and not let it be a means of water getting into the building. So we did it by having the anchors sloping down and they were tightened up at the back, so the water would have to go up at an angle through a hole like that.

The problem was forming all those holes. I hit upon the idea of using mailing tubes--three-quarter-inch mailing tubes--and dipping them in lacquer, like a thin varnish. They then were strong as iron. The advantage was that they could be cut so easily. The carpenter could just saw them to fit neatly. Put a nail in the form on one side and then the other, pour the concrete, and there the hole was. There are hundreds of holes in the buildings; especially were they needed on the guesthouses because the hill there was just riddled with springs. They weren't flowing springs, but there was springing water there.

Woodbridge: You made frequent visits to look at what the workmen had done.

Steilberg: Yes, to check up on the reinforcing, and the trenches, and so on, to see that they were sound.

Woodbridge: Were there any problems in pouring the concrete?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. There was difficulty in getting proper materials, but if you have lots of money to do it, you can do it. I know they got pretty good concrete there, because I could see where they had cut into the concrete, up above in the towers. In poor concrete, the cuts do not go through the big aggregate, they go around it; the aggregate is too strong. But if it goes right through the aggregate, that's as strong as you can get. So I had that evidence several times that they were doing a good job.

Woodbridge: What about the construction of the indoor pool? Was any of it a real structural problem?

Steilberg: I didn't have anything to do with the indoor pool. This building here,

Woodbridge: The main building...

Steilberg: Was Mr. Huber's entirely. That's mostly steel frame.

Woodbridge: That was his structural work?

Steilberg: Yes. Well, he was very competent in all fields, but for some reason Miss Morgan had an idea that I couldn't do steel framing. I could, and I've done a lot of it, but I didn't care for it as a means of aesthetic expression. I have done steel framing, the exposed part of it. But I don't like to do something that is then just covered up, that isn't part of the architecture. In general, steel framing is not a part of the architecture; it's just something to support the architecture. So it didn't interest me, and maybe I wouldn't have done it as well, I don't know. Maybe she was right.

Woodbridge: What about the outdoor pool?

Steilberg: I don't know who did the structure on that. I may have been busy on other things at that time. You see, I went into my own office in 1922, so I was working in my own office.

Woodbridge: You were taking the contracts from Miss Morgan for the Y's.

Steilberg: It wasn't a contract. I just billed her, as I've done with all architects. I don't take a contract, I just give them the billed time.

Woodbridge: But you were the engineer.

Steilberg: Yes, she left me very much alone. She would give me the plan, and that was it.

Woodbridge: When was the last time you went down there?

Steilberg: I was there as Mr. Hearst's guest--I'm sure it was at Miss Morgan's request--in 1931. Of course, I've been down several times for these historical societies.

I think that in general it's true that San Simeon is better at a distance than it is close up. I was buying some postcards one time and there was some other person there--I guess he was an architect--buying some of these same things. I think he was kind of a meany, because he turned to me with a kind of a snarl and he said, "You know, the closer you get to Mr. Hearst's enchanted hill, the less enchanting it becomes."

Steilberg: I was so ruffled by that--I mean the general meanness in the way he said it--that I couldn't think of anything at the time. But on the way home that evening--it was a new moon evening--I thought I should have said, "Judging from the pictures"--even the telescopic pictures that we had of the moon at that time--"you might also say the same thing about the moon." Of course, now it's even more evident. I think these closeups of the moon are horrible.

Woodbridge: It's a dead planet.

Steilberg: Dead planet! It's a terrible place. When you think of that beautiful golden disc and the thin silver crescent, and then all this tripe about being on the moon before the Russians are there.

Woodbridge: You told me once that you thought that Mr. Hearst's taste was entirely formed by, say, his travels and the times, and that he had a very acute ability to read architectural plans and drawings.

Steilberg: Yes, he did. I'm quite sure, if he had been born, say, thirty years later, he could have gone far as an architect.

VIII THE MONASTERY

Woodbridge: We were going to talk about the monastery.*

Steilberg: Miss Morgan called me up--this was early in '31--and asked me to come to the office at once, that she had an important mission that she thought I would like to consider, and she showed me the photographs of this monastery which Mr. Byne had tentatively purchased for Mr. Hearst [Santa Maria de Ovila]. She wanted me to go as quickly as I could to see if it would be possible to bring this to this country, and she said, "Also, I want your candid opinion of it, whether you think it is as good architecture as pictures suggest it may be, and if it is in such a state of ruin that it couldn't be salvaged."

"Well," I said, "I'll think it over and tell you on what terms I'll go, in writing." So I said I would be glad to go, and I would charge four and a half an hour for my time working daytime. But that didn't mean I would stop with the clock, as she well knew.

I would go first to the monastery and see if I thought it could be salvaged--if it would be possible to save it, in a ruin as it was. I realized that there would be many replacements, because there were many replacements in The Cloisters in New York. I said, "If I don't think that it's a thing that I would consider worth taking, I'll say so."

So I went over on the ~~fastest~~ transportation I could get. (I stipulated that I would go wherever I could second class, but wherever second class was slower than first class, I would go first class, whatever the cost--airplane or whatever. There weren't many airplanes around then.)

So I went to Madrid, and Mr. Byne took me out there the next day.

*See appendices for more details about the monastery.

Woodbridge: How far from Madrid was it located?

Steilberg: About eighty miles northeast. It's on the Tagus, which flows past this monastery and on down under that wonderful bridge at Toledo, and then comes out in Portugal and out to sea. The Tagus is to Spain what the Tiber is to Italy.

I was appalled at the condition of the buildings. The winery was in quite perfect condition. It was a simple gyre vault, about forty-foot span. It was beautiful in just its simplicity. It reminded me of Mr. Maybeck's gyre vault in wood for the original Hearst Hall at the University of California.

The buildings that were left--that we would recommend taking to America--were the refectory, which was the second one built; and the chapter house, which was the third; and then the chapel, which was the fourth. There were some other secondary rooms, such as a sort of treasury beside, I guess you'd call it, a sacristy. And there was something left of the cloisters, around which this was built. But the cloisters were very inferior workmanship and I didn't think we could save very much of them. We did save some.

The refectory was used as a warehouse; the chapter room was a manure pit; and the chapel--well, many of the vaults were still there, but the vault cells had nearly all fallen in, so that the only thing that could possibly have been saved were the vault ribs in the chapel.

In general, the structural condition of the refectory and of the chapter room was surprisingly good--that is, in reference to structure only. The surface was marred and broken and all that; but to give an idea of how sturdy they were, there was an earth fill on the top of the refectory which had been placed over the vaults after the stone was on, to make the slope for the tiles. That must have added at least 250 lbs. a square foot to the load, and yet they were standing there with sizable trees growing on them, ten to fifteen feet high. They must have been beautiful.

Woodbridge: Was that a common practice, making slopes like that?

Steilberg: Yes, it was a common practice, apparently, at this place; wood was so scarce.

Woodbridge: In other parts of Spain and in Italy too they've had the same shortage of wood. That's very interesting.

Steilberg: They just made the slope with that. Of course, the tiles had been laid over that. Well, the nearby villagers, after the monastery was abandoned, just took the tiles. Then the water got in there, so the trees grew. The trees, I would say, were at least ten years old.

There was some growth of that sort, but not quite so much, in the chapter house. I'll get down to specific cases. I wrote to Miss Morgan--I have a copy of the letter somewhere--that I considered the refectory as fine a room of its size as I've seen anywhere, and I'm not excepting Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. [Holds up picture.] Now, this is that chapter house, so you can see what wonderful proportions it has. Although there were only these five or six windows, you might say--seven with this one at the end, and maybe a little one there at the other end--the lighting in it was very beautiful. These walls were over four feet thick. You've got not only the light in this portion itself--the opening itself--but also the light that was reflected. It was a very lovely effect. I don't see it even at Sainte-Chapelle; of course, they have wonderful glass there, but this was just pure architecture.

Woodbridge: A lot of the Cistercian monasteries in France have this arrangement. When you stand at the end of the long end, you don't see the windows at all, you just see the suffusion of light through it. It's very beautiful.

Steilberg: I've made these notes on here that there was a flurry of excitement when BART wanted to get some of these--not BART, but some of the supervisors wanted to appropriate these ruins for making just decoration, embellishment they call it. It makes me wild just to talk about embellishments of architecture.

Woodbridge: Yes, I remember looking at the drawings when you gave them to me.

Steilberg: Here is the plan of it, you see. [Holds out plan.]

This thing has been so misrepresented in the press. I don't know that it was the intention, or that there was any malignancy on the part of the Hearst newspaper writers, but they did do a great disservice to the city as well as to their paper in conveying the idea that this was just an "erector set"--that all you had to do was to put it together, you see. I suppose they put it

Steilberg: that way to sort of magnify Mr. Hearst's gift. Well, the gift itself would not be a tenth part of the cost of putting it together. It's an enormous job to put it together.

Woodbridge: Now, what happened to the idea that it was going to be used someplace on his property?

Steilberg: I think there was some suggestion when it first came over that he might have thought of it being used on the Wyntoon property. Yes, that was it. In fact, I made up drawings for it, great big drawings, some down at San Simeon and some here, and I gave the models...

Woodbridge: The models, yes, we have upstairs.

Steilberg: This was to have been one of the great halls, and so was this [pointing to drawings]. The complication of building Gothic vaults is something that very few people realize. You see what I mean in this [referring to drawing]: you take any of these surfaces here, or this surface here--it's as complicated as I say here, I think, somewhere, as the surfaces of a propeller. There's curving in two directions, you see; it's a warped surface. To get a modern mason to do that is another story, you know, even in the Renaissance vaulting there--practically in the same radius, you might say. This, for instance, here--the fact that this is raised a little bit means that this is not a circular surface; it's a twisted surface. And, of course, thereby is much of the beauty of it. It has the sense of growth in it, like a plant.

I saw some evidence of that when I was making a detailed drawing of the Pazzi Chapel in Florence. I took that as my thesis, Brunelleschi's first, I think. It was interesting. In the columns all of the foliage was strictly according to ancient models, and in the pilasters they started at one end, apparently, and they came out right on the forty-five degree. But the next one, and the others following, the Gothic--the medieval artist--came out again, and they were twisted a little toward the light. It was a small thing, but it made all the difference in the world. Those pilaster capitals that had that Gothic touch in them were alive, you know what I mean? That's why I harp so continually, "For God's sake, let the artist do it. Don't create your ornament over the drafting board."

Woodbridge: Well, he rejected the idea finally as too expensive for Wyntoon, was that it?

Steilberg: Well, I don't know. He didn't recognize anything as too expensive [chuckle]. I think the Hearst Company just cracked down on him. So they let him build a sort of a Bavarian village. Mr. Maybeck did his worst work on that, I think. I thought it was a caricature of a Bavarian village, even for Mr. Maybeck. From the pictures I've seen of it, it was pretty poor Maybeck, probably because he couldn't go there often enough.

This chapel is the last thing. This was built, I think, probably in the fifteenth, and maybe even the sixteenth, century.

Woodbridge: Yes, if it has that very complicated type vaulting.

Steilberg: Very complicated, all of this vaulting. And nearly all of the cells in here--these vault cells--were sunk down in the ground.

Woodbridge: What did you do?

Steilberg: We did ship what we could of this. And this was the thing that was most wrecked in the fire.* In fact, I recommended to the museum trustees that they not attempt to do this because--if they want to rebuild it, yes, and use these drawings--but if they want to have it as part of the monastery, no, they couldn't do it at all.

Woodbridge: The stones were charred beyond saving?

Steilberg: They were charred and then they were cracked. I went over the whole business as far as I could go. The money ran out and I offered to go through all of it, but the men who were doing the demolition had to have their pay, and they wouldn't go further.

You see, when you're working with stone work, it has to be a solid piece. If you hoist a stone up like this with a pin that's spread like that, you know, if that stone is cracked someone could get killed by it.

Woodbridge: How long were you there in Spain examining the buildings?

Steilberg: Oh, I think about five or six weeks. I made many trips out there. I didn't stay there overnight, but you could go out there in about three hours; it's a good road.

Did I tell you about the chapel windows being glazed with alabaster?

*Reference is to the last fire, in 1959. - H.L.

Woodbridge: Oh, no, I don't think you did.

Steilberg: These windows in the chapel were very small, but they were glazed with alabaster, big slabs of alabaster, not glass. I walked in here with Mr. Gomez, the superintendent of this work, and I noticed these fragments of this, sticking in here. He said, "Yes, they had no glass then. They used alabaster." I said, "Well, are there any fragments of that here on the ground?" He said, "No, I'm afraid they've all been swept away." "But," he said, "I can get a piece for you easily."

He called to one of the men. I think I've told you about his warning never to speak harshly to the mechanics. There was a place where the wall was out here. They were going to throw the cord with the stone over it to pull up the rope, so a man could climb up there. He said, "No, don't throw it through the window. There may be some fragments of that alabaster there that would cut the cord, and the man would get on it, and it would be bad for him. Throw it over the top of the wall; that will not be so likely to be sharp and harsh."

The man threw the rope over--and this is way up in the air, that's thirty feet or more, anyway--and two of them were soon on the other side, and there was the knotted rope, and this fellow went up and got a piece and brought it back. I gave it to Miss Morgan. I don't know what became of it. But it was about so thick. The color and texture were very much like that of the English cathedral. So this might have been quite nice too, although dimly lit, but, then, it was the chapel.

Woodbridge: When you came back, then, you didn't bring the monastery with you?

Steilberg: No, it came on I don't know how many shiploads--I think ten shiploads or something like that. I had a lot of trouble on that. I finally had to appeal to Miss Morgan to issue an order that the stonework must be brought to San Francisco, not sent to New York and transshipped. The Spanish boys thought they saw a chance to fleece Mr. Hearst, you see, and get him at New York and then get a little side money from him for shipping it on out.

Woodbridge: Oh, I see. But it did come, then, to San Francisco.

Steilberg: Yes, it came through.

Woodbridge: I remember you pointed out that this was, of course, the bottom

Woodbridge: of the Depression, 1931, and I suppose it seemed rather frivolous to be bringing a monastery across...[laughs]

Steilberg: I didn't realize--I was working until near the end of '31 on the drawings for Wyntoon. The model is entirely on my own. I didn't charge for that; that was my own interest in it. I don't know, I should have gotten it through my head that there was a depression on, because there were only three people, I think, in the Pullman when I went east. The conductor came in jubilantly in Kansas City and said, "Oh, I got another one."

Woodbridge: [Laughs.]

Steilberg: I went over on the Bremen, the North German liner. That was the fastest time across the Atlantic then, by about a day or so, I guess.

Woodbridge: So how many days did that make?

Steilberg: Four days, and then across the continent in just about four days--a little less, I think. I wasn't in New York more than a half a day.

Woodbridge: Was it announced that Mr. Hearst was giving this to the city while you were away?

Steilberg: No, it wasn't announced that he was giving it to the city until long after; it was years afterwards. He had it for Wyntoon, you see.

Woodbridge: That's what I was confused about. In other words, when it came here in '31, it was still meant to go to Wyntoon.

Steilberg: To Wyntoon, yes.

Woodbridge: Where did he store it?

Steilberg: It was stored in the Haslett warehouse in San Francisco. I think he had storage bills of \$100,000 or so at a time.

Woodbridge: It sat there for how long?

Steilberg: I think it was in storage there for nearly eight or nine years.

Woodbridge: Do you recall when he did give it to the city?

SANTA MARIA DE OVILA

Top left: Cloister walk. "This has since been taken down, boxed, and is being shipped; the vault cell stones were not sent being considered too crude."

Top right: Vaulting over the church looking west. "With this material I can visualize the creation of a great Gothic Hall over a hundred feet long."

Lower left: West portal of church. "As Mr. Hearst had made it clear that he was not interested in Renaissance architecture this portal was not included in the original price. I imagine it could be bought quite cheap; this is a matter to be decided. The quality is very fine."

Small photo, middle right: Taking down the triple entrance to the Chapter House from the Cloisters.

Lower right: Refectory, showing centering under vaulting preparatory to demolition.

January-April 1931. Photographs by Arthur Bynne and Walter Steilberg.
Copies on captions from Walter Steilberg for information of Julia Morgan.



WALTER T. STEILBERG
ARCHITECT AND ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER
1 ORCHARD LANE · BERKELEY
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April 20, 1931

Mr. Antonio Gomez
c/o Mr. Arthur Byrne
Madrid, Spain

Dear Mr. Gomez:

There were so many matters requiring my immediate attention when I returned to Berkeley a couple of weeks ago that this letter to you has been delayed. I have often thought of the interesting and pleasant days that I spent with you and your men at Santa Maria, and I have watched with great interest the news of the establishment of the Republic. Of course, every American believes in Republics, even though our own is not entirely successful, and I have faith that this change of government will be of great benefit to your country. In the three weeks which I spent in Spain this time I gained something which I had not gained in my other European travels: a close range acquaintance with the Spanish craftsmen and workmen; it was an experience which I will always remember with pleasure and for which thanks are largely due to you.

I have had several conferences with the architect but our client has been away; I shall not be able to see him until next Sunday, May 3d. I have presented the matter of asking you and the Master mason to come to California for the reconstruction work, and the architect seems to think favorably of it; this will probably be taken up with the client at our next meeting.

Enclosed herewith are several diagrams showing dimensions which I require for the preparation of my structural drawings. I shall greatly appreciate your getting these for me; metric measurements will be quite satisfactory but should be accurate within a couple of centimeters, and should be checked with the greatest care inasmuch as the foundation dimensions and column positions will be determined from them.

With kindest regards, I am

Yours very truly,

WTS.

Steilberg: I can get that exact date, but I don't remember.

Woodbridge: Was it before the war or after?

Steilberg: Oh, it was before the war. It had been taken out to Golden Gate Park and stored there back of the Japanese gardens. It was then that there was that bad fire--the first of the bad fires; there were three or four others after that.

I've given you, or the University, the sketches Miss Morgan made when she went out there after the fire. Now there is evidence of the drive of that little lady and the persistence of her dream about things, you know. This thing was all in ruins and everything, and yet she went out there day after day and made sketches of every little detail that she could get to.

Woodbridge: I guess the last fire was well after the war.

Steilberg: Yes, it was after the war, I'm quite sure. I know it was shamefully neglected during the war. Of course, the war provided an excuse for anything; you could do anything and get away with any neglect or anything else, and nobody thought anything of it.

Woodbridge: I remember well that Stephen Jacobs, who taught here in the middle fifties, wanted very much to put it back together. At that time he was dismayed by the fact that the numbers had been burned off the stones, and the stones had been scattered around. It was worse than the worst jigsaw puzzle anyone could imagine. They could have had a beautiful structure.

Steilberg: If they had just had this one room, the refectory, really a noble room, with the transverse arches coming down on the big sculptured corbels, about so big, eight of them, and all slightly different in design (but no "ornament," and so I don't know that Hearst would have approved)...

Woodbridge: It certainly would have been well worth it, and it would have been a great attraction in the Park as well, a priceless addition, it seems to me.

Steilberg: They were trying to get parts of this for the embellishment of the subways under the Bay.

Woodbridge: That was more or less your last association with the Hearst project, I suppose you'd say.

Steilberg: Yes. After that it was Miss Morgan who was doing it for the City of San Francisco. She was commissioned by the Medieval Museum, and it is so labelled on the drawings that were made, The Museum of Medieval Arts, Golden Gate Park.

IX JULIA MORGAN [2]

YWCA Work

Woodbridge: It would be good to summarize, I thought, the history of Miss Morgan's relationship with the YWCA. That was very interesting, as I recall--how she first got the work.

Steilberg: Her only advice to me when I left her office to go in for myself--she was most gracious and most helpful to me in getting started--was this: don't ever turn down a job because you think it's beneath you, because you think you want to do something larger. She said, "The reason I tell you this is that one of the smallest jobs I ever had was a little two-room residence in Monterey. This was done when I first started in practice for myself. The lady for whom I did it was most pleased with the job, and now the lady is the chairman of the board of the YWCA. And from that has come all these fine big jobs we have, including some that you have." So that was the story.

Woodbridge: That was the first "Y" that she did?

Steilberg: The first one that I did for her when I went into business for myself was the Pasadena. It was the first building that I know of in California that had rigid frame construction, in this sense: in rigid framing, you can, if you choose, get greater height in the middle of the room by thickening at the wall and using the...[inaudible]

Woodbridge: I have actually seen sections of rigid frame buildings, so that I know what you're speaking of.

Steilberg: Well, I got that idea from the Chinese. So when people accuse me of doing "chinoiserie," that's not quite it [laughs].

Steilberg: There was an addition made later to the Pasadena YWCA. I think Mr. Huber did it. I didn't get that one; I don't know why. I know that mine came through the earthquake without any trouble, which damaged the nearby city hall pretty seriously.

Woodbridge: Was the Hollywood "Y" next?

Steilberg: Yes, I think so, just about that time. That was a sizable building, and I thought quite a nice one--very much exposed structure inside. I guess it was about that time that I did the Margaret Baylor Inn in Santa Barbara, a YWCA Inn.

Then in 1926 I did the Honolulu YWCA, which was the largest one I worked on.

Woodbridge: I know that still stands, and I've heard people speak of it. Did you go to supervise the work on that?

Steilberg: Yes, I was there, and, in fact, it had to be changed radically after I was there because we had had the soil surveyed, but all these soil penetrations had come down on rock pinnacles, and there was nothing but mush in between. So I had to do an entirely different thing. I had to take things into my own hands there because there was no time for communication. I had to redesign that wing of the building--the gymnasium wing--entirely. They got a little extra room out of it that way.

That was an interesting building, and I think in general a successful one. The people there seemed to be well satisfied with it.

Woodbridge: Did you also work on the San Jose "Y"?

Steilberg: No, I didn't do anything on the San Jose "Y". I did some work in Palo Alto for her; that was war work, though. Those were hostess houses. I think that's still standing. I think they're using it for some sort of thing.

One of the best of Miss Morgan's buildings, I thought, was one that was over here near Sather Gate, right where there is now a big complex of buildings, right where the restaurant is now. That was torn down, and I thought it was one of the best of her timber structures.

Woodbridge: What type of building was it?

Steilberg: All wood frame, you might say. It is to restaurants what St. John's is to churches. Just straight structure, wooden structure.

Woodbridge: And you did the structure for her on that.

Steilberg: Yes, I did the structure. I also did the lighting--indirectly. I got the lanterns--Miss Morgan thought it would be nice to have these Chinese lanterns, you know, this shape. They're made with bamboo bows and then silk over that, and then the seaweed gelatin sprayed on that. Num Sing was the man who made the lanterns in San Francisco. I got a price from him. He gave me the price and asked if that would be satisfactory, and I asked, "Can you get this done by next Saturday?" "Yes." I went back on Wednesday to see how he was getting along, and I don't think the old rascal had even started on them. I started to enjoin a little, and I said, "You'll have these ready Saturday, sure?" He looked up at me with his little beady eyes and said, "Maybe so I do, and maybe so I don't. Maybe so I go to country." But when I went there they were all ready [laughs]. He wasn't going to let any damn Caucasian run him around.

St. John's Church

Woodbridge: That reminds me that we didn't speak of St. John's, and I want to get your feelings about the job. I remember you mentioned on one of our earlier tapes that Miss Morgan had wanted to preserve the residential scale of the building.

Steilberg: Well, there's one thing that has never been done, one thing that I suggested, that was never carried out by the congregation. When I first saw and walked into the Sunday School, at the far end there were red geraniums outside. Those red geraniums through that amber glass were just as beautiful as the windows of Chartres, you know. I asked some of the people there to be sure to put flowers there. I said I would provide the flower boxes, and the flower boxes are still there, but they're still empty. It would help that building so much, even now, to do it.

Woodbridge: Should I call them and suggest that? Because I think you're right, if the flower boxes are still there and they are strong.

Steilberg: Well, they need flower pots, but the shell is there.

Woodbridge: We've talked many times about St. John's, but just in summary: I remember your saying the main factor in the building was the economy.

Steilberg: I think it is completely unfair to both buildings to compare St. John's with the Christian Science Church. They're entirely different. There's an entirely different purse, for one thing. Also, the Christian Science Church has the advantage of being on a corner lot where you get the round of it much better than you do with a building that is built between other things. I think many people don't realize that. The same way with the Unitarian Church; you get the sense of being in three dimensions more than you do in St. John's. In a way, St. John's Church is like a palazzo in Venezia--it's one face.

Woodbridge: When the congregation came, of course, they were a spinoff, I think you said, or a splinter group from another congregation?

Steilberg: I don't know about that at all.

Woodbridge: In other words, they weren't an established group with a lot of money.

Steilberg: I don't know. They certainly didn't have a lot of money. I don't know how established they were [chuckle]. I know that the men who were largely responsible--who were very active, let's say, in the building committee--were Cobbledick-Kibbee Glass Company.

Woodbridge: They did the glass, didn't they?

Steilberg: Yes, and they rustled up a lot of money too.

Woodbridge: I think you said you detailed the lighting fixtures for St. John's. Of course, the building is largely structural, so that in a sense it was your working out of the structural problems which really is the architecture of the building.

Steilberg: Well, I don't know. I would say Miss Morgan called the shots on that. Someone suggested, I remember, that we use the same lighting fixtures that they had in the Sunday School, but she said, "No, I wanted to introduce some curved lines in this building. That's the reason for the curved mullions in the windows." She said, "You'll find that it always helps to have some curved lines, not everything going this way and that." I think she's quite right.

- Steilberg: So these are like wagon wheels, you know, and I think the ones in the Sunday School are fine, but I think that for this place these are better. And they do carry some of the curvature that you find in them.
- Woodbridge: I remember that in early pictures of it the organ was exposed.
- Steilberg: Yes.
- Woodbridge: I always thought that was very handsome--a wonderful idea. But it's unusual. Most congregations at that time thought the organ was unsightly and ought to be closed up. You just did it that way and they accepted it?
- Steilberg: That was the way Miss Morgan wanted it, yes. I told you about the organist playing on it, practicing?
- Woodbridge: No.
- Steilberg: I came around there when I lived, at that time, in North Berkeley, and here I heard this ungodly tune coming out of the organ. It was "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." The organist said, "Oh, I always play that. Quick changes test an organ very well, much better than a hymn." He said you could get away with anything with a hymn, with all those drawn out things, but an instrument has to be on the nose with "A Hot Time" [chuckle].
- Woodbridge: You said that she designed it without a cross on the top, but then they changed it.
- Steilberg: Yes, someone insisted on that. I don't know who.
- Woodbridge: And it was a Celtic cross that you chose as a model.
- Steilberg: Yes. Well, the same as the one below, which is also based on the Celtic cross, which is a little different.
- Woodbridge: And you worked out the lettering?
- Steilberg: Yes. The lettering I'm responsible for, I think I may say entirely. Otto Haupt is responsible for it. They have a book down at the Santa Cruz library now--I could go right to the page--something between the Gothic type of lettering, which is very tricky, and the classical lettering.

Some of Miss Morgan's Strengths and Interests

Woodbridge: In terms of office time, that must have taken relatively less office time--the church?

Steilberg: No, I think it took quite a good deal of office time. After all, it had to be very carefully detailed, because when it's done--no coming around and putting some furring over it, or plaster to cover it up. It was all exposed, like a sketch, in a sense--this was a sketch in structuring. It probably took a good deal of time. I never kept much track of our time in Miss Morgan's office, excepting on one job--on the Lombard house, which I found cost about \$50,000.

Woodbridge: Where is the Lombard house?

Steilberg: It's in Piedmont. A brick house. It's the one for which the client came to the office with a picture that had been drawn for him by an English architect, and it was just the exterior. Miss Morgan came to the office--and it was one of the few times I heard her giggle--and she said, "Well, we have something new here. We have a front of a house and we have to put a back on! You know, we usually start in this office from a plan and then work out, but now here's a man--he's a very nice man, too--and all that he knows that he wants is that he wants a house that looks like this, and then he wants all these things put in back of it."

That was a honey of a job, a fine job, a very expensive home, and it kept several of us working for a couple of months. There was a problem there with the two chimneys and I took that home and worked on it and the next day I said to Miss Morgan, "How about doing a novel one? We'll have a reinforced concrete laundry chute, the only fireproof laundry chute in the West."

Woodbridge: You worked on the Ransome School, didn't you?

Steilberg: Only the open-air gymnasium, which they had down in the gulch, and I thought it was also a very good job. It was to gymnasiums what St. John's is to churches. It was maximum economy, and all that. I thought it came out very well. The laurel trees were right outside, and of course they helped a little. Myron Hunt thought so well of it that he came up--he found out somewhere that I was working in Miss Morgan's office--and he said in his sharp way, "Steilberg, I want to see the plans of that very excellent gymnasium that Miss Morgan did out in Piedmont."

- Steilberg: So I asked Miss Morgan if she had any objection to Mr. Hunt having a set of prints to this. She said of course not; she'd be glad to have him have a set.
- Woodbridge: That was certainly a tolerant and open professional attitude.
- Steilberg: That was her attitude about everything. She didn't have any of these ideas about...
- Woodbridge: ...secrets or hoarding her ideas.
- Steilberg: If the ideas are any good, the further they go the better.
- Woodbridge: I had the impression that much of her work was for women's organizations, even though, as you say, she was not a women's libber.
- Steilberg: Yes, it was. She also was always trying to give women a chance in her office. One of her-- I wouldn't say graduates, because Grace Moran was not there long enough, but she did go on to be head of the Domestic Science School in Cornell University. If you see her, she'll remember Miss Morgan, I'm sure.
- Woodbridge: Was there a woman employed there at all times when you were in the office?
- Steilberg: Not always. Another one was Alice Joy, who is Thaddeus Joy's sister. She worked there for a time. Dorothy Wormser--her father was Mr. Wormser of the Sussman-Wormser Company. (She said her father was violently opposed to advertising, wouldn't tolerate advertising, but as soon as he was gone!)
- Woodbridge: But I suppose that women who had work, like the "Y" and the schools, naturally thought of Julia Morgan, didn't they?
- Steilberg: Yes, I think that was so. Someone spread the idea--I'm sure she didn't, but some people had the idea--that a woman would know more about laying out a kitchen than a man would. It doesn't follow at all. As a matter of fact, that was one of her failures, I think. She always insisted on sinks being two-foot-eight, and in every data book you'll find the design of sinks puts them at three feet. I know many of them she put in were too low, and they were torn out. Just recently, one of these men who was down in San Luis Obispo said in their house down in Ojai they just had the sink torn out because everyone was wondering why they got backaches standing at that sink. It was two-foot-eight.

Woodbridge: She was small, though.

Steilberg: She was small, yes. But she was very firm on that.

Woodbridge: What would you say her strongest points of design were?

Steilberg: Well, I'm probably prejudiced, because you naturally think of the things that help you the most, but I would say the working from the inside out. So many architects still work from the outside in.

I gave Mr. Longstreth an article that was written by some student about Mr. Maybeck, and Mr. Maybeck saying, "The plan's the thing." Did I send you that?

Woodbridge: I was wondering, in working from the inside out, if she didn't have a feeling about--as many people did at the time--including the out-of-doors.

Steilberg: Yes, indeed. She was a landscape architect, and she knew just where the paths were to go. She was always very particular about that--"this is the main entrance to the building, and this is the service entrance here."

Woodbridge: How old was she when she retired?

Steilberg: I don't remember. She died in 1957. It seems to me she retired in about 1952, or something like that.

Woodbridge: But she died at the age of eighty-five, didn't she?

Steilberg: No, I don't think she was quite that old. She was born in '75... maybe so; I don't know. She certainly lived an eighty-five years' worth.

Woodbridge: You once told me that she didn't have any real hobbies, or that sort of thing.

Steilberg: No, I don't think so. The only one that I caught her at was copying Cantonese lettering. I came in the office one night--oh, this was long after she retired--and she was bending over her desk. She always had a chair that was a stool with a back, and she was bending over this and working with a little brush.

I had learned to walk quietly in Alaska, and I came up to her, and she was startled and almost dropped the brush, and she

- Steilberg: said, "Oh, you startled me. I was just copying some of these characters. They're so beautiful, even if you don't know what they mean." And she had a booklet there, Introduction to Colloquial Cantonese.
- Woodbridge: Where did her interest in Oriental art, particularly Chinese, come from?
- Steilberg: I think very likely from Chinatown nearby. She would often go up there. I have so many things I ought to show you.
- Woodbridge: You showed me some of the things you had, and I'm a great admirer of Chinese art. I remember that, as you point out, Chinatown in those days...
- Steilberg: It had a great deal more, too. There was a great deal more there. There was probably still more before the fire, but there was a great deal in Chinatown that was very fine.
- Woodbridge: Did she buy for clients there?
- Steilberg: Yes. She bought some things for Mr. Hearst, but apparently Mr. Hearst didn't cotton to that at all.
- Woodbridge: Was her own taste in furnishings Oriental?
- Steilberg: No, I don't think so. It was eclectic, without reference to a period.
- Woodbridge: Did she design furniture?
- Steilberg: I think she had a great deal to do with the design of the furniture in St. John's, yes. Thaddeus Joy did some of that; he'd do some furniture designing. Sometimes she would design things like that. She did another Presbyterian church. Now if that Presbyterian church down the street, on College, were shingled, I'm sure it would be gone into so that you would know it.* It has a nice interior.
- Woodbridge: Oh, yes, I like the building very much, and I wanted to ask you sometime about that. Was that a result of the first of St. John's, or just independent?

*This is intended as a gentle jibe at today's tendency to define Berkeley architecture as "the brown shingle style" and, indeed, to pay more attention, often, to structures which are brown-shingled, regardless of merit. - H.L.

Steilberg: I don't know. I did the drawings for that also. But it didn't seem to me as interesting a building as St. John's.

Woodbridge: It doesn't have the structural expression, or the integrity of the building is not as forceful as it is at St. John's.

Steilberg: Of course, there is always a certain solid ground that you're on if you're working with one material, and there you're working with...[end of tape]

[Excerpted from tapes done in fall and winter, 1972, by Sally Woodbridge with Walter Steilberg.]

Steilberg: I was just thinking today that people speak as if San Simeon were the only job Julia Morgan ever did. I'm sure that if you just reduce it to the common denominator of footage, of floor area, if you want to regard architecture that way, that what she did outside San Simeon was five to ten times as much as what she did at San Simeon. Now that's a very poor way to rate architecture. But people, most of them, can't rate it any other way.

Woodbridge: You mentioned that she would take the train down there after working all day in her office, and then meantime she had work in Pasadena?

Steilberg: She had work there; she would go on sometimes to work in Pasadena; she'd be away from the office for several days. The capacity of that little lady for work was just incredible.

Woodbridge: Did she have her commissions from the national YWCA at this time?

Steilberg: Well, she told me one time that most of her work had come from her cottage that she had done in Monterey, and she advised me to never turn down a job because I thought I was too big for it.

Woodbridge: It's interesting to me that so much of her work was done for women's institutions.

Steilberg: Well, I hadn't thought of that, but it's true.

Woodbridge: The "Y," women's clubs, Mills College, and other schools. I don't know if there was a sympathy because she was a woman, or because, like in many of these commissions, one commission leads

Woodbridge: to another...

Steilberg: You have seen the "Y" in Honolulu? I think that's one of her best jobs.

Woodbridge: She, of course, I suppose, really couldn't have--even though she had a vast residential practice, that wouldn't have been enough to have given her...

Steilberg: Oh, no. She said to me one day, when she had gotten another job--I forget what it was--well, she was even doing work for Mr. Hearst. She said, "If we don't get one of these big jobs, we don't make ends meet just from residences." But she never got around to charging more than six per cent for residences.

X WALTER STEILBERG'S WORK

Steilberg: In 1942 I worked on Kodiak Island for the Sims-Drake Construction Company, which was building a base there. Everything just stopped after Pearl Harbor, and all my jobs--I had several going--stopped. We looked for what jobs we could get.

Woodbridge: You had had your own office.

Steilberg: I had my own office at that time; I had been practicing nearly twenty years.

Woodbridge: Nearly twenty years you had had your own office. How large had your office been?

Steilberg: I never had more than two men working for me, excepting just the last time I did work for Miss Morgan. I did it in my own office, and I had five men then. That was just after the war, in '46 or '47 I guess it was.

Woodbridge: Who were other architects you did structural work for?

Steilberg: Gardner Dailey was another big client. Then there were Porter and Steinwedell, and Michael Goodman, and several others.

Woodbridge: This was up to the Second World War?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: What did you build for Gardner Dailey in that time?

Steilberg: I did a number of residences for him. Then I guess it was just after peace was declared that I did the Red Cross building in San Francisco. Following that, the hotels in Honolulu.

Woodbridge: It was residential work up to the immediate war period?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: Did you do residential work for Michael Goodman?

Steilberg: The work I did for Michael Goodman was for larger buildings. I did a complete revision of the Mining Building; all of the interior court there was done at that time and then another wing was changed. I also did the State Farm buildings down here on Center Street quite near the Red Cross building. That was an interesting job of taking an old building and increasing the capacity of it for more stories.

Woodbridge: Michael Goodman was the architect?

Steilberg: Yes, and I did the structure for him.

Woodbridge: When was the Mining Building work?

Steilberg: In 1945, I think, just after the war. I just set up my office then, up on the hill. I had come back from the war.

Woodbridge: Porter and Steinwedell also did residential work?

Steilberg: Yes, they did residential work principally. For Gardner Dailey I did the redoing of International House.

Woodbridge: Was that pre-war?

Steilberg: No, just after the war.

Woodbridge: In other words, I had always imagined that the period of the thirties and the forties was not a period of building boom.

Steilberg: Well, it was not. But I did do a number of large buildings for Julia Morgan in that time. There were some sizable buildings. Let's see, what were they? I can't remember now, but we did do some sizable jobs then. Of course, the work on the Wynton job extended over into about '32.

A lot of the time in those dark years of the thirties, though, I did consulting work for the Basalt Rock Company, for one, and for Pacific Coast Aggregates. I carried through some testing programs for their work on concrete blocks, different kinds of concrete blocks. I think the "honor," if you can call it that, which I appreciated the most was that there was a sort of competition for the Potrero housing out in South San Francisco. Each of these companies wanted to submit a design, and they each

Steilberg: trusted me to submit a design which would be in competition with the other.

Woodbridge: That must be very unusual.

Steilberg: I think so, and I appreciated the trust.

Woodbridge: You wouldn't undercut one to serve the other, and so forth.

Steilberg: No.

Woodbridge: Concrete was really a major interest of yours, wasn't it?

Steilberg: Yes. I think it probably became a major interest from my work for Miss Morgan. I saw the opportunity for using it for interior architectural expression, because you save a lot of money if you can do the two tricks in one: get the effect without putting up a lot of false work afterwards.

Woodbridge: She gave you the opportunity to do this?

Steilberg: She called me in on the Pasadena YW[CA] and that was the first one on which I did the rigid framing and exposed concrete beams and columns and so on--the whole structure exposed. I did that in building after building after that. She also did that with timber work that I did for her. The San Diego YW[CA], which is long since disappeared, was that way. Girton Hall up here--I haven't been in it for many years--I don't know if that's been painted white or not.

Woodbridge: I don't know either. Is that her work, Girton Hall?

Steilberg: That was her design, and I did the structure, yes. During the early years of the thirties, I designed the architectural library up here at the University--you know, the concrete library? I designed that. I did the architectural as well as the structural work on it.

Woodbridge: Where is that?

Steilberg: It's near the North Gate there, where you come in.

Woodbridge: Is that in the buildings called the Ark?

Steilberg: Yes, the old Ark, and then this library was adjacent to it. I think it's a good interior there.

Woodbridge: That was yours, as architect and engineer?

Steilberg: Yes, that was mine. Afterwards Mr. Moïse* added some stacks. He was the architect on that, and I did the structure on the stacks too.

Building and Rebuilding the University Stadium

Woodbridge: What other work did you have at the University, if any?

Steilberg: Let's see. The rebuilding of the University stadium. That was just after the war, I think about '47. It extended over many years; there were many contracts. And also the culvert where Strawberry Creek comes through.

Woodbridge: Yes, there are some drawings of that. That extends the culvert?

Steilberg: I don't know whether they're still using it or not. After that, they got the donation for the swimming pools. Of course, the stadium has a long and sad history. I fought it all that I could when they wanted to put it in there, and so did some of the other architects. But only a handful of us did oppose it.

Woodbridge: John Galen Howard opposed the stadium, did he not?

Steilberg: Yes, very emphatically. In fact, he had designed the stadium and it was all ready to go out for figures. It was to be down about where the Edwards Field stadium is now. Its axis was the end of Ellsworth Street. Of course, at that time the University was to have a maximum population of twelve thousand, and they even doubted it would go over ten thousand. But shortly it was over twenty thousand and then came to be twenty-eight and so on. So it's an entirely different thing. I think it's a crime, though, to put that stadium where it was. They were to have the Botanical Gardens extend clear up this beautiful canyon.

Woodbridge: How did it come to be chosen as the site?

Steilberg: That came about through pressure; you might call it sophomoric pressure. Stanford had a stadium and a dirt bowl. The whole mania of dirt bowls started with Yale; that was the original one. They just went out on some level land and scraped a hole in the dirt, and piled it up around the edge, and there they had their stadium. Stanford had this same thing; it was a relatively easy

*The late Howard Moïse, professor of architecture at UC Berkeley. Steilberg designed Moïse's own residence on Panoramic Way; Moïse subsequently added a second story, which was most compatible with the original design. - H.L.

Steilberg: thing. Some nephew or relative of one of the regents--I forget his name--got hit with this happy idea: "Let's us excavate a hole in the hills here." So he was just a super salesman. He was one of the designers of it, if you please, and he wasn't even an architect. I don't think he was an engineer either.

Woodbridge: That was the only free ground?

Steilberg: Oh, no. The University could have put it way down near the waterfront. The University had a lot of property down there.

Woodbridge: Why that site?

Steilberg: They wanted it on the campus. Stanford had its stadium on the campus; Yale had its stadium on the campus; we must have ours.

Woodbridge: And this was the available site on the campus?

Steilberg: Well, it was available, but they were going to wash down Big C Hill for it. I had something to do with the stopping of that. I made a model of it, and if they had made it all a dirt fill, as they proposed--you see, it isn't; it's largely arches down this lower side--they would have had to tear down Big C Hill, leaving a horrible scar there, and the fill would have come down below where Piedmont Avenue is now. It was the craziest thing.

Woodbridge: How many years did this go on?

Steilberg: The opposition to it was only short-lived because they got the press back of it. I think we had them on the run. At the time, there was a group of people up around Panoramic Hill, and also many of the faculty, especially the engineering and scientific people, opposed; and the geologists were shocked by the idea of putting it right on the fault line, and so were the engineers.

Woodbridge: They knew it was on the fault line?

Steilberg: Oh, yes, they knew it. "It hasn't caused any trouble since 1868; why should we worry about that?"

As I was saying, I think we were making headway with the press when Professor Rieber, who was a much beloved member of the faculty, but very sensitive about his own place--and he had a beautiful place up there on Canyon Road; you've seen it--came out with a sad bleat about it: "The construction of the stadium on that site would spoil the view from my house." The newspapers,

- Steilberg: who were brought out, I think, by the people who were pushing it, came out with big headlines, "Professor says the stadium would hurt his view from his breakfast table," or something like that, just as nasty as it could be. Well, it turned the tide right the other way.
- Woodbridge: You were seen as obstructionists.
- Steilberg: Yes, obstructing progress. So, partly because of the model we made, and partly because there were some people who had the courage--Maybeck was one of the few architects who was a disgrace to the architectural profession; he just backed right out of it. I went to see Mr. [inaudible], and he said, "Well, that's too controversial." They were afraid of business, you see.
- Woodbridge: Besides John Galen Howard, who were some of the other architects who were in that position?
- Steilberg: Will Corlett, and that might have come from pressure from me, I don't know. I certainly pressured a number of them, but I didn't get much support. It was a sad day.
- Woodbridge: I heard the story that Howard refused to have anything to do with the plans after he found out where it was to be built.
- Steilberg: Oh, the plans were made in his office.
- Woodbridge: But he refused to supervise the work.
- Steilberg: I don't know. He designed the thing. This motif he has of one arch and three arches I think he's very successful with.
- Woodbridge: It was my understanding that he tried to disengage himself.
- Steilberg: That's partly because the University set up a policy about that time that since they had a supervising department, they took over the supervision of all buildings. They didn't do it well; they asked too much of their superintendents.
- Woodbridge: So it was out of his hands; it was done under the University supervision.
- Steilberg: Yes, and it was not well done. Rebuilding the stadium was an interesting job. We rebuilt the seats entirely. They had all gone to pieces, so I replaced all those ledges on the east side--most of the seats were in concrete now, you see--and then rebuilt

Steilberg: the seats over the arch section on the westerly side. But the damage to it was due to rust from the steel reinforcing sets' being placed right down on the floor of the forms. It was careless supervision; it was not the engineers' fault. In that case, it was the University's fault because they didn't have competent inspectors.

When they built the stadium, I tried my best to get them to make the maximum use of what they had there. That is, I thought they could use the dam of the stadium to form a lake above, so that you would have a lake that went way up back there. After all, California has won distinction in rowing more than in anything else; we've had two Olympic championships in rowing. I thought it would be nice if the men had a place to row right at hand there. It would be not many hundred yards, but still enough to get the feel of water, which is a whole lot better than a rowing machine. But, I don't know--I don't think anyone ever looked at the model [laughs].

Woodbridge: Would that have been a very costly thing?

Steilberg: No, it wouldn't. You had to have a dam there anyway [inaudible]... bank seats uphill. When we were redoing the stadium, I tried to get them to put a big pool all along the easterly side, and to have it just along the side toward the easterly bleachers, and then have that covered during the football season with plywood sheets and this rubber carpet, such as they are now using in many of the places. They can still do it if they want to. You could have a pool there a couple of hundred yards long and fifty feet wide, which would be quite nice.

Woodbridge: Of course, Strawberry Canyon recreation area is right there.

Steilberg: Yes, it's right there, and it's always crowded too.

Woodbridge: It's terribly crowded and the pools are quite small.

Steilberg: I know.. I think that they could have that much more. I often take a walk up there and the thing that interests me is that in no case have I found less than three times as many people sunbathing as are in the water. Now, in this place, you'd have all these bleachers there; you could have 50,000 people sunbathing!

Woodbridge: And still have enough water so that people could swim.

Steilberg: I don't know if I can do anything with that or not. Doing things in the University--I think they have all these committees: I'd

Steilberg: get these notes, "It has been referred to committees." There's the "slap down" committee, and the various rejection committees whose whole function is to reject.

Homes in the Panoramic Hill Neighborhood*

Woodbridge: You have been living on Panoramic Hill since 1922?

Steilberg: Yes, even before that. I've lived up there since 1917. I had the house at 38 Panoramic first.**In my first year here I was used to roaming around a good deal. The first time I had a chance, on a weekend, I went up into the hills, and at that time there were no conifers on the hills at all; they had just been planted shortly before that by the water company.

Woodbridge: Was there any eucalyptus or any other kind of trees?

Steilberg: There were eucalyptus on the north of the campus, yes, but none of this magnificent lot of conifers that you have on the south hills; that wasn't there at all. I remember there was only one large pine tree up in the Botanical Gardens and it stood there for a long, long time.

Woodbridge: What was the vegetation, then, on the hill?

Steilberg: Just madrones and bay trees in the canyons, but that's all; the trees were in the canyons. Then there was a lot of shrubbery, of scrub oak, you know. I was here when the first winter of heavy snow came--1906, 1907-- and it was a very heavy snowfall. I went up on the hills then and it was very hard going because the snow was over a foot deep up there. Up at the height of about 1,500 feet it was very heavy. Down where we are there was snow that was heavy enough to build snowmen on the piers there. My daughter, Helena, reminded me that when she was seven years old we had a snowstorm--and that would be fifty years ago because she's fifty-seven now--had a snowstorm with which I got

*J.R.K. Kantor, University Archivist and Panoramic Hill resident, has added the bracketed information on Panoramic Hill included in this section. - S.R.

**This house W.T.S. built for himself and his first wife, Rowena; she did the woodcarvings around the front door, as she did the decorative sculptural detail on all his early buildings. - H.L.

Steilberg: snow to build her and her sister a snowman on those two piers at the side of the steps.

But in that first visit to the snowfields, I found many of these little pine trees which had been planted by the water company, I guess just a few months prior, and they were just sticking their little tops out of the snow; they were almost covered completely by the snow.

Woodbridge: You just went up there to look at the snow?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: You didn't have any idea that one day you'd live up there?

Steilberg: No, not then. I did, not very long after; within ten years I sort of had my heart set on it.

Woodbridge: Did you build the house in 1918?

Steilberg: No, we built the house in 1922.

Half a dozen houses, I'd say, were on Prospect Street. There was one house way up at the top of the hill, not far from number 365 now, called "the old Frenchman's house." An old Frenchman lived in this house that was all wide open, just sheltered.

Woodbridge: You mean it had no walls?

Steilberg: No, partly boarded up, but very little.

Woodbridge: What sort of man was he?

Steilberg: He was a hermit. I saw him a few times; he didn't speak to anybody.

Woodbridge: How did they get water up there?

Steilberg: Well, there was a spring at the place where Mr. Ratcliff's house is; the Ratcliffs' house is right over a spring. [Robert Ratcliff, 74 Panoramic Way.]

Woodbridge: What number, about, is that?

Steilberg: Well, the house that I did, that you went into, was 101 Panoramic

Berkeley's architecture

Berkeley Gazette, Dec. 19, 1974



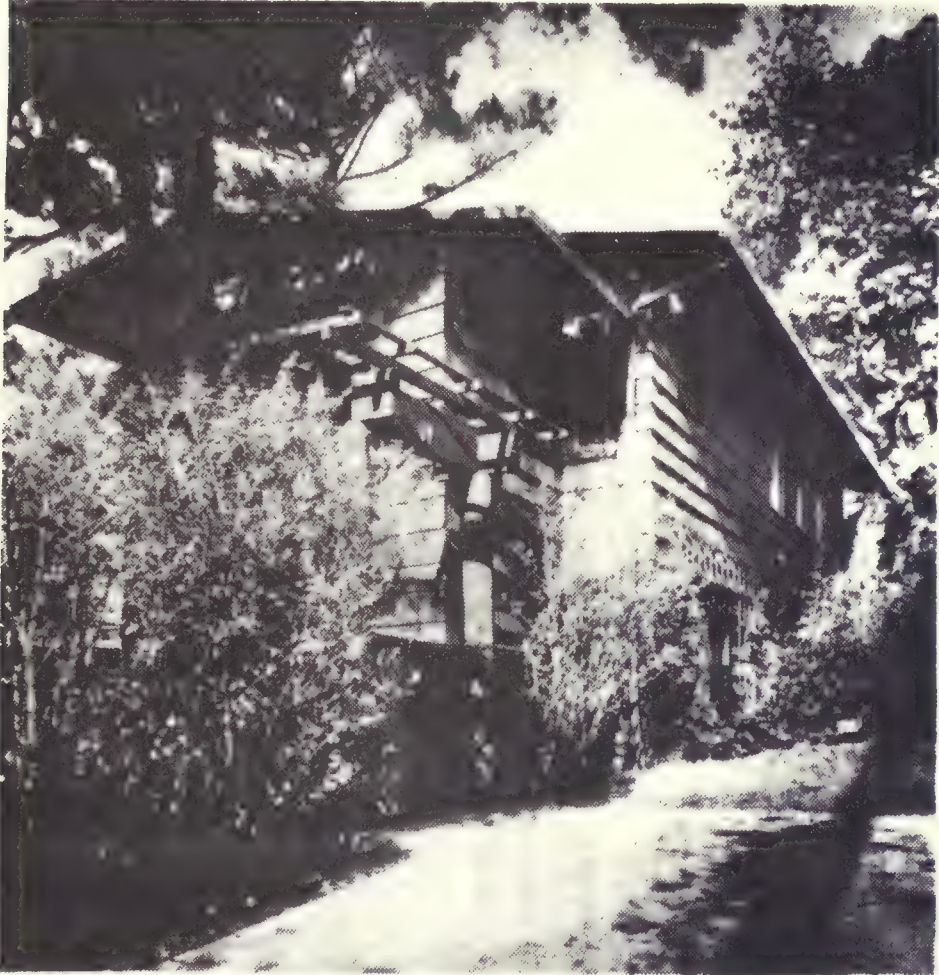
STUCCO WITH A PURPOSE—In a walking tour earlier in the year, the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn. visited a fascinating and important but little-known example of Berkeley's building art. Located in a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood, the house at 4 Mosswood Lane was designed by the recently deceased Walter Steilberg. Mr. Steilberg considered himself primarily an engineer and was modest to the point of self-effacement regarding his architectural work. He was, however, a designer of considerable skill and subtlety. The Mosswood house contains many of Steilberg's visual trademarks: the inclusion of leaded designs in colored glass, for instance, and the presence of pierced, brightly glazed oriental tiles. The roof terrace, however, is quite a departure for the times, and the house is experimental in more radical but less obvious ways. Containing no wood except doors and kitchen cabinets, the house attempted solutions to two specific problems. First, Steilberg very early foresaw the disappearance of lumber as a cheap, plentiful building material, and felt a need to develop and perfect alterna-

tives to wooden construction. Just as important an impetus was the Berkeley fire of 1923: "I watched 400 buildings burn to the ground and decided to build a fireproof house," he said recently. Mr. Steilberg took many photographs during and after the fire, and was intrigued by the survival of very thin shells of stucco after the wooden buildings which presumably supported them had completely burned away. These observations led to development of the structural system of the house on Mosswood Lane: two thin stucco membranes enclosing an insulating air cavity, with vertical reinforcement sections throughout the wall. All window frames are metal, sills are tile, floors and roof are reinforced concrete. Tucked unobtrusively into the wooded hillside the house is as modest as its designer; with its careful consideration of its site and its concern with economy and structural innovation, the house seems as relevant to the 1970's as to the 1920's when it was built.

Commentary: John Beach
Photo: Francis Pennington

Architecture Worth Saving

Berkeley Gazette, Oct. 14, 1971



A HOUSE THAT WELCOMES YOU — This house typifies the naturalness and simplicity of Berkeley's older wooden homes is at 69 Panoramic Way. Built originally in 1929 for the late Prof. Howard Moise of the Department of Architecture at UC and designed by the eminent Berkeley architect Walter Steilberg (also designer of the College Women's Club), the original one-story structure was expanded to a second story by Prof. Moise, long a beloved teacher on Campus, in 1954. The Architectural Heritage Committee of Urban Care, city-wide conservation group, which is now compiling lists of

Berkeley's most beautiful and historically important buildings, considers this structure one of the most graceful examples of the simplicity of expression, lack of pretension, and harmony with the hillside site among local houses of the last 50 years. Built on crowded lower Panoramic, it is also a significant guide to the creation of more space (it is now two living units) in complete harmony with the original design. This photo is one in a continuing series in the Gazette, spotlighting Berkeley's wealth of architecture worth preserving for posterity.

Steilberg: Way; so it's about between 90 and 100 Panoramic Way.

There was a farmhouse there--the [Silas] Mouser farm--and most of their farm was devoted to fruit trees; they had almonds all over that area where our place is now, and where the Price Apartments is [5, 7, 9, 11 Panoramic Way]--south of there--and on up to where the Riebers' [Charles Henry Rieber, 1886-1948, Professor of Philosophy] house is [15 Canyon Road]. I think the Riebers' place was the first one that made an indentation in that almond grove. There were almond trees there when we built our house, in 1922, that were at least a foot or a foot and a half in diameter. I think there's one stump there now that's all of that. And there were several magnificent Spanish chestnut trees.

The water from this spring was pumped with, I guess, an electric or gasoline pump--I don't remember which--and there was a cistern right up back of the 101 house. Around 1906 the house that the Kellys have now [Harold Kelly, 1 Canyon Road, originally Torrey house; Mrs. Kelly was Dorothea Torrey], and the Rieber house, and another house in there--I don't know who owns it now...

Woodbridge: The Dewey Morgan house?

Steilberg: Yes, that one. Those were built then [in 1906], and ours didn't come along until 1922. The Price Apartments were built in 1910, but there were several there that showed that there was to be an invasion of dwellers there.

Woodbridge: What kinds of people owned property? Was it in large parcel?

Steilberg: There was a lot of large acreage there that belonged to the Mousers, who had a farm there, as I said. The Mason-Mc Duffie Company, I think, acquired that, and they had the stairs built.

Woodbridge: Was it Henry Atkins who designed the stairs?

Steilberg: Yes, I think so, and they are very good. Mason-Mc Duffie did a good job on that; they did a very poor job in the grading of the street, in burying the spring alive. That caused slides there, and it was only through the wisdom of Mr. Paine--Robert Paine, the sculptor, who was the father of Mrs. Robert Ratcliff--that the spring was drained. He made a fountain of it for their house and that, for the time being, put a stop to it. Water ran the year round; if he hadn't done that, we would have had more slides there.

Steilberg: As to the hill itself, there have been lots of articles about the hill. For a long time it was referred to as "the lunatic fringe" that was there. Well, we did have some unusual characters, there's no question about that.

Woodbridge: Like, for instance, what sorts of characters?

Steilberg: Unusual people. We had a prince living there for a time, you know--a Rumanian prince [at 21 Mosswood Road], I think he was, a very nice person. Then there have been several authors that lived there, and professors of all sorts. Near that house that's up near the point,*which I designed and Mr. Moise added to, there were Physics Lewis [Exum Percival Lewis, 1863-1926, 27 Panoramic Way], Philosophy Lewis [Clarence Irving Lewis, 1883-____, 25 Panoramic Way], and Chemistry Lewis [Gilbert Newton Lewis, 1875-1946]--the three Lewises that were on the faculty at the University, all eminent. Two of them were taken to Harvard.

Woodbridge: It was an area generally, then, that was occupied by University faculty, or people associated with the University?

Steilberg: Yes, people of that kind; they weren't commonplace.

Woodbridge: It seems a logical place for people from the University to live would have been back up that hill.

Steilberg: Yes, I think so. Of course, when I first moved up there in 1917, there was only one person on the hill who had an automobile.

Woodbridge: What was the road like?

Steilberg: A dirt road, and quite perilous in a way. Most people wouldn't think of driving. The poor horse that tried to drag the mail cart up there would stumble and fall every so often and have to be hoisted on his feet because it was such an abrupt turn there.

Woodbridge: They must have essentially just paved the dirt road, then.

Steilberg: Yes, that's what they did.

Woodbridge: Without grading it?

Steilberg: No, they just put rocks on it.

Woodbridge: Was it a problem to build on the hill?

*The first hairpin turn on Panoramic Way. - H.L.

Steilberg: Yes, and we have all built a little unwisely. I know that we have cracks in our walls that I should have been able to foresee if I'd paid more attention to the lesson that I should have learned at St. John's.

Woodbridge: What was that?

Steilberg: As I think I said, Mr. Mc Cullough [sic] was responsible for those foundations going down, not just to the yellow clay, but down to the place where the yellow clay was plastic in the hand. If you don't go down that deep, you rest on a very firm soil, but that firm soil has the capacity to absorb water, and when it absorbs water it goes up, and hell and high water can't stop it. It's very bad.

Woodbridge: You didn't have a problem, then, finding water on the hill.

Steilberg: I think there's water right at our place; I know that at Mrs. Stern's apartment there, next door (at the Price Apartments), there's water twenty feet down, because they've made drillings there. How it would pay to get it out is another thing.

Woodbridge: I was wondering if Mason Mc Duffie had any plans for developing the hill as a residential area.

Steilberg: I never heard of any, no. I don't think they tried that in general. They just put the roads in and had some foresight about providing for sewer easements. Sewer easement from Dr. Jepson's house [11 Mosswood Road] would run down through our place. Sewer easement from 38--my old place--down through Le Conte's [Joseph N. Le Conte, 19 Hillside Court]; and Corlett [William Corlett, 50 Panoramic Way] had a sewer easement from his house down to the street; otherwise you'd have a dickens of a time.

Woodbridge: Was there any zoning for what could be built there?

Steilberg: No. You can see there was very little zoning because the Price Apartments, which is that large apartment complex south of us, was built in 1910. In a way it was a technical violation of the building code; the California building code states that all bedrooms shall have access to a bathroom through a hall, and not through another bedroom. However, you can get out of that by simply labeling one of those bedrooms a sleeping porch, and that was what was done there. I'm sure that Miss Morgan called that to Dr. Price's [Clifton Price, 1886-1942, Professor of Latin] attention, and Dr. Price said, "Well, there are lots of people here

- Steilberg: who have children and the families like to have a room like that that they can shut off from the hall. so they can keep an eye on their children." He said, "I'm sure we'll have a market for that." And I notice they've all been rented. All four of those apartments are strictly illegal, if they wanted to make a row about it.
- Woodbridge: But there aren't many apartment complexes on the hill, are there?
- Steilberg: No, very few. The one in back of that one was Miss Morgan's first job on the hill--I believe that was about in 1908--and that has four apartments in it [77 Panoramic Way]. The others are converted; they were residences that have been converted into apartments.
- Woodbridge: Was the land expensive at all?
- Steilberg: To give you an idea, we paid \$8,000 in 1921, I guess it was, for the lot, which was just about a quarter of an acre. That's about \$32,000 an acre, and I'm sure Mason Mc Duffie wishes they had it now.
- Woodbridge: I was going to say, that doesn't sound like cheap land.
- Steilberg: It isn't cheap land. It already started to climb.
- Woodbridge: I'm surprised. I would have thought...but the proximity to the University must have been attractive.
- Steilberg: Yes, the University is right across [the way].
- Woodbridge: In other words, the people who moved up there had to be able to afford to build a certain kind of house.
- Steilberg: Yes, and even where I built #38 [Panoramic], I got the land for less than \$2,000, but it was on a forty-five degree slope. I had to put several thousand dollars into the foundations. Well, that's all right, if you know what you're doing.
- Woodbridge: When you were designing your house in 1922, the view was obstructed largely only by the stadium.
- Steilberg: At the time that I planned the house--in fact, the house was well on its way, the foundations were all in, when the stadium frenzy broke loose. The dining room plate glass window was planned to be looking right into the Botanical Gardens, and the other way

Steilberg: you would look right into San Francisco. Meanwhile, a big sorority house [Alpha Omicron Pi] went in over here, on the street below, and over here came the stadium; so the raison d'être of the dining room has sort of been lost. We can still see the Golden Gate, but it's not what it used to be.

Woodbridge: It had a mirrored wall, didn't it?

Steilberg: Just one face that went toward the pantry had a mirror in it.

Woodbridge: That's a lovely idea.

Steilberg: I think that was done before; I don't know, I've seen it before. I know it wasn't original with me. I think Maybeck had one like it, and I think there were others. I think it had been done with several places. I know that the idea was in one of the French palaces too.

Woodbridge: Yes. Of course, the mirrors expand the size.

Steilberg: The trouble with it is that the mirrors don't carry through, and as you're sitting there you find that half of the person's looking this way and the other's...[laughs]. It's a little distressing sometimes. But the advantage, of course, is that it does carry the light right around; you have a sense of openness in the place.

Woodbridge: The other houses you designed on the hill there--the totally concrete one that you showed me, which is which number?

Steilberg: There's one at #4 Mosswood Lane, that's the one at the back of our house, and there's another one at 101 Panoramic where the lady took us in and gave us tea. And there's another there with five arches under it that has an apartment over it [#8 Mosswood Road]. Those are the three concrete ones that I did.

Woodbridge: They were done in what year?

Steilberg: In 1930--about that time.

Woodbridge: Were they done for people who were interested in having concrete houses?

Steilberg: No, the one with the garages under it was done for a man who wanted that, but the other one--the 101--I had done in the hope of getting people interested in concrete houses. But the bank was not interested; I think I told you, they were not interested

- Steilberg: at all. It was a strange thing. I thought that now that we had come to another cycle of rebuilding the country, they might be interested. But, no, there are very few houses that are...
- Woodbridge: ...actually all concrete interior and exterior.
- Steilberg: Yes, and that have fireproof roof systems too. Of course, if you have a conflagration, having concrete walls doesn't mean very much; you have to have a concrete structure.
- Woodbridge: Is it 101 that has the vaulted ceiling that you laid the tubing...? [Cardboard tubes make the forms for the concrete. S.W.]
- Steilberg: Yes.
- Woodbridge: I think you said that was something you figured out as a way of vaulting the ceiling.
- Steilberg: Well, I thought it was a simple way to get an acoustic treatment there.
- Woodbridge: That is a problem with concrete interiors, isn't it?
- Steilberg: For that reason, I've usually turned to a panelling of the ceiling with fiberboard, either beamed or some other form, to get away from the echo.
- Woodbridge: Yes, the floor, and the walls, and the ceiling--the reverberation...
- Steilberg: Yes, I have one or two rooms like that, and they are about as habitable as rain barrels.
- Woodbridge: If you carpet the floor...
- Steilberg: Yes, wall to wall carpeting...
- Woodbridge: ...that deadens it right away. The house that you took Richard Longstreth and me to see, around the bend, is a wooden house. That was done in what year? [Marion Parsons' house, 29 Mosswood Rd.]
- Steilberg: That was done just about the time I built mine, about 1917 or 1918.
- Woodbridge: About the time you built the first house that you built.
- Steilberg: Yes.



Woodbridge: The first house was about 1917 or 1918, and you said Howard Moïse added to that later.

Steilberg: The one that Howard Moïse added to was built in 1930. The one that I built in 1917 was across the street from that--#38. That's the one where you go down two stories to the bedrooms. I built three houses on the hill there in which you go down to the beds.

Woodbridge: I remember--the cottage you built on the back of your lot. You told me also that you laid out that Mosswood Lane, which goes back--a dirt trail. I thought that was a beautiful example of the way the paths must have been.

Steilberg: That Mosswood Road formerly terminated in a path; it was a large path that went way on up into the hills, one of the most delightful walks that we had. Then someone came along and found that it went across the corner of his lot, and he wanted to put a garage there [Condrey house, 48 Mosswood], so that stopped the path. But there was a man--I can't think of his name, it's a shame--he was an Englishman who lived in a house there on the hill and his thing was to go out with a machete every Sunday and clear these paths on the hill. He made a beautiful job of it, just all over the hills; you could walk anywhere.

Woodbridge: Were people great walkers who lived there?

Steilberg: Yes, they were. Some of them were not fit to walk, because the fools would go out and come back with arms full of wildflowers--I mean, rare ones. We had what was called a wind poppy then; it was a beautiful little flower. They'd come back with an armful of these flowers and they'd start to wilt and you'd see them down all along the paths, where these idiots had picked them and then thrown them away.

Woodbridge: Nothing was protected then.

Steilberg: No.

Woodbridge: The Botanical Garden had been started?

Steilberg: The Botanical Garden, when I was here in 1906, was just in front of the library, in that area [north of Doe Library in swale where temporary buildings are now]. It was a stretch there several hundred yards long, and a hundred yards wide. Then during World War I they put a lot of hospital beds in there--there were a lot of emergency cases, not from the war so much as it was from the

Steilberg: terrible flu epidemic. The boys died by the hundreds in that place there; it was terrible.

The Botanical Gardens had been so much damaged by all these "temporaries" that they put in there, which are like temporaries that they sometimes have in back of Cowell Hospital, that they moved the Botanical Gardens. They took over some gardens that had belonged to some wealthy people, about where International House is--and had the Botanical Gardens there. Then, just about the time the Botanical Gardens got going well there, along came the stadium; and when the stadium was in, there was no reason why they shouldn't have International House there. The Botanical Garden now, up above, is very lovely, I think, but it would have been so much lovelier if it had gone all the way up here.

World War II

Steilberg: When the war came, which was in '41, I was too old to go in. I tried to get into the navy, but the naval officer said, "Well, sir, we could use your experience and your abilities all right, but the hell of it is that in order to get you in at your age, I'd have to make a rear admiral of you." He said, "If you really want to do some work, get into one of these companies that are doing the construction work that is trying to save something, trying to get some bases done." So when this Munson-Johnson [sic] Company advertised, I applied.

Woodbridge: Where were they based? On the West Coast?

Steilberg: They were in Seattle. They worked us, all right; sixty-eight hours a week is awfully hard over the drafting board.

Woodbridge: How many people like you--architects and engineers--did they have?

Steilberg: There were probably a dozen or so of us there. They kept bringing men in and they'd find that they weren't adequate, so there was a changing personnel all the time. Then came the Seabees and they were pretty good.

Woodbridge: So the Seabees took over the base.

Steilberg: They took over most of the Munson-Johnson. I was retained at the request of the army--for heaven's sake, I don't know why, I think

Steilberg: because the colonel saw me working there at night.

Woodbridge: And he was impressed. Did you have a family then?

Steilberg: Oh, yes. My younger daughter was married when I was in my second year at Kodiak. I came home to go to her wedding. I already had a grandchild--Helena had a child.

Woodbridge: Your first wife died of influenza?

Steilberg: There were three people in my family who died of influenza: my mother, my wife, and Helena's infant sister all died within a month's time.

Woodbridge: What year was this?

Steilberg: In 1918-19, December and January. And Miss Morgan knew just what to do for me; she had me working about sixteen hours a day.

Woodbridge: When you went off to Kodiak, then, your children were not a responsibility anymore. When did you teach the Seabees?

Steilberg: I had classes there; I just offered this course, which I called "Elementary Structural Design."

Woodbridge: Were you asked to offer the course?

Steilberg: No. I offered it and it was enthusiastically endorsed by the officers there because they had so many of these boys who didn't know anything about structure--just handbook stuff, you know. So we had these classes after three years and I thought it was probably the best work I ever did.

The Berkeley City Club, and the College Women's Club

Steilberg: I wish I had the plan for the Berkeley Women's City Club. It was on a sheet of butter paper. There's the building, just as it is. In the Berkeley Women's City Club there's a tremendous complication, and Miss Morgan had confidence in me to solve the engineering problems. But it wasn't easy and I couldn't have done it if I hadn't had her collaboration.

Woodbridge: The problem was that you were putting the gym in the swimming pool area.

Steilberg: Yes. The gym comes over like this [refers to drawing]; the swimming pool went right under here. I had to support all that weight of the gymnasium columns on the arches for the swimming pool. There were other things like that all through the building. I think it is probably the most complicated concrete structure that there is in this part of the country. It's very complex and it was a lot of fun to do.

These are the sketches for the College Women's Club. You'll see, as we go hurriedly through these, that it doesn't take much to go from this to a working drawing. These are the sketches, but these are made over an eighth-inch field, as you can see.

Woodbridge: Would Miss Morgan have sketched out a plan first?

Steilberg: Much like that. I know it wouldn't have been as large as this. As I told you, the Berkeley Women's City Club was done on an eight-and-a-half by eleven sheet, and on a 16/32 scale.

Woodbridge: So she would have given you that, and from that you would have worked up this, which is still a sketch, and from this would have come...

Steilberg: These are freehand drawings over a definitely T-squared job.

Woodbridge: What you're doing here is showing the structural timbers in place.

Steilberg: Yes. There are disadvantages to that. It was Mr. Maybeck, I think, who said that you didn't want to tie yourself up to a structural scheme. Well, it all depends on how you go at it.

Woodbridge: You mean he didn't like that idea?

Steilberg: No. He worked in charcoal in a large scale.

Woodbridge: In that way, the structure had to come later, didn't it?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: I like the College Club very much. That's your own work, isn't it?

Steilberg: Yes, the College Women's Club is my own. This is it, you see.

Woodbridge: I would have thought that sketches began much bigger.

Steilberg: You can avoid fooling yourself with that size. Here's the other plan. Now, that has all the appearance of a kind of a freehand sketch; well, it's a hard working drawing, if you want to look at it that way. Everything is precisely to scale; it was built very close to this.

Woodbridge: This sketch does have a freehand appearance.

Steilberg: This is all done freehand over...

Woodbridge: But you did a very careful scale drawing first.

Steilberg: This [refers to drawing] was hardly finished when someone complained about the heat up here. There was a deck in back of there and they could have put the ventilation right in that. But I don't know why, in a club like that, there's always someone who gets an "authority" complex. It's not only women's clubs, but men's too. They want to order this, and they've never done any ordering in their lives. All of a sudden, boom, this complex of "doing things on my orders" hits them, and they say, "Put 'er right over here." So they put the rectangular one there, which was very bad; they could have put something with a curve in there.

Woodbridge: How did you get the commission for the College Women's Club?

Steilberg: It was a strange thing. I met the Coolidges some time after the Berkeley fire. They lived over near the Blind School [California State School for the Blind, Derby and Warring Streets], and I met her, I think, at the Joralemon's house.* I said, "I think that I would advise you to put some sprinklers on your roof." And I went over and advised them on the placing of the sprinklers on their roof, and then putting some fire retardant paint on the shingles they had, and they did that. We got along very well.

They had a showing of Indian baskets that night. They have a wonderful collection--she's a great expert on the Southwest. She wrote a very wonderful book on it--I'll let you have it sometime. Someone said, "Well, it would be interesting if these Indian baskets conform in any way to Jay Hambridge's [?] remarkable discoveries about the dynamic symmetry of the Greek vases." You know about that, don't you? It all depends on which handle

*Eugene and Mary Joralemon, #5 Panoramic.

Steilberg: you take, or which line you take to get dynamic symmetry. I don't know just what the formula is. I thought it was just ludicrous and I said, as mildly as I could, that it depended on whether you took this facet, or that one; you could make it fit any formula you wanted, if you were convinced of that formula. Apparently that made a hit with Mrs. Coolidge.

She was on the building committee of this club, and the first thing I knew they called me in, and that's the way it started.

Woodbridge: What year was the [College Women's Club] built?

Steilberg: That was built in 1928. The original commission was to have been for a much larger building than this one, and that was in 1923 or 1924. I wish you would look at this: this is a trick, if you want to call it that, that I learned from the Chinese. As you know, you take a classical column and come up to the top and usually put a Corinthian--a flowering thing--of some sort to pass from a circle to the square. All right, I took this pretty much from the Chinese: these columns are not round; they're squared with strongly rounded corners. This corner up above is not rectangular, it is also slightly rounded. So you don't notice it. I think it's a successful thing.

Woodbridge: You don't have to worry with the transition from one definite shape to another.

Steilberg: No. This may sound like shameless bragging, but I think it is a better solution than you see down the street on the gymnasium, which has this ponderous stuff, and then the little, flowery, fussy Corinthian capital there. This was all simple, so I wanted to keep this simple.

And this had a good trellis on it. If you want to see what not to do with trellises, look at most of the buildings around town. You can look at any of Mr. Maybeck's, or any of Miss Morgan's, or any of mine, and you'll see a trellis that was designed for a vine to climb on, not for a suburban railway to run on; most of them look like that. Look at the one up here on the law building.

Woodbridge: Too overstated.

Steilberg: Yes. The same thing on the playing field nearby. They think of it as something not to be defiled by vines, I suppose.

Woodbridge: I am very glad to have seen these drawings.

THREE OTHER EXAMPLES OF STEILBERG'S WORK

Top: *The College Women's Club, Bancroft Way and College Avenue, Berkeley. Designed by Walter T. Steilberg in 1929.*

Lower left: *Claremont Junior High School, Oakland, WTS's second commission in his own office. The sculptural detailing is by Rowena Symonds Steilberg.*

Lower right: *Bay window and barrel vaulting at the Steilberg-designed (1931) concrete house at 101 Panoramic Way, Berkeley.*



Steilberg: That shows you one way of doing architecture. You might say I inherited that general procedure from Julia Morgan.

"The Cats" for C.E.S. Wood

Steilberg: Here is a picture of Charles Erskine Scott Wood. He wrote Heavenly Discourse and this book caused quite a scandal in its time because it is not reverent to standard ideas of religion. Actually, beneath it, if you really read it, he's a deeply religious man. His place down there, below Los Gatos, is one which I designed.

This [refers to picture] is his gardener and his cook. This is the little mask I told you about that my daughter Helena's mother modelled in less than three hours, just while the cement was setting. In a way it's a good technique because it is only open to those who have real talent; you can't labor over it. You can take clay and fool around with it for days, but this is just now. I got the idea for it first in trying it in the San Francisco Exposition in 1915. There were some wonderful quick sketches in setting plaster--you know, that's just within a few minutes, ten minutes, casting plaster. These were done by a Polish artist. I don't remember his name at all, but he was good. They were caricatures, but just marvelous. I wondered why more sculptors didn't try it, but I guess they didn't dare [chuckle], because you really have to have tremendous talent.

Woodbridge: Where, precisely, is the location of the place?

Steilberg: This is below Los Gatos. You know, there are two colossal lynxes there--or cats--that's the entrance.

Woodbridge: It has a name, does it not?

Steilberg: Yes, "The Cats."

Woodbridge: I didn't know you designed that. What year was that designed?

Steilberg: About 1921, and I worked on it then for several years.

Woodbridge: It's a residence, of course, but of what size?

Steilberg: Well, it has a large living room, about 20'X40', and a high ceiling. Then there are three bedrooms and a large kitchen, a guest

- Steilberg: room--oh, you'd call it, I guess, a nine or ten room house. It was larger, though, than the average country house, and it was built around a court, with an amphitheatrical garden at the back of the court. The plan was roughly this: [refers to drawing] here's the bedrooms, and the entrance porch here...a porch over here...and then this went back and came into the living room here. Oh, and there was a stair too and then there were rooms back in here, and back in here. There was a little colonnaded court in here. Back here there was this garden with an amphitheatre, because it was like the Greek Theatre in its contour. So it made quite a nice place.
- Woodbridge: The house was concrete?
- Steilberg: Yes, concrete. Well, it was not the thing that I devised later.*
- Woodbridge: Not blocks.
- Steilberg: This is Sara Bard Field. She was quite a women's rights worker in her day. [Points to picture.]
- Woodbridge: Was Mr. Wood a writer always?
- Steilberg: No. He graduated from West Point and was a lieutenant in the army, but he got so disgusted with the Indian fighting that he resigned. He went to Portland and he was a very successful lawyer in marine cases. They had lots of them up there because the insurance from San Francisco to Seattle was higher than the round trip across the Atlantic in those days.
- Woodbridge: I see, so they had lots of grievance cases.
- Well, why was it named "The Cats?"
- Steilberg: It was populated with lynx cats around there; the lynx were quite common there. This is Sara Bard Field [refers to picture] resting in the court there. She was a handsome woman and very intelligent.
- Woodbridge: Did the house have a particular style of design?**
- Steilberg: Well, I don't know that it did. I didn't try for anything like that at all.
- Woodbridge: It sounded sort of like a Mediterranean house.

*Further discussion of "The Cats" can be found in the Regional Oral History Interview with Edward Hussey. - S.R.

**On matters of Steilberg and "style," see Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Steilberg: Yes, it would be that more than anything else.

Woodbridge: Does it have a tile roof?

Steilberg: No, a flat roof with a deck, and then there was a sort of a sun room on top of that. This [refers to picture] is his granddaughter, Rebecca. She was Joe Esherick's first wife.

Woodbridge: Oh, yes. I met her years ago. She was a designer too.

Steilberg: Yes, she was an architect; she graduated in architecture and got her certificate.

There he [Wood] is, with my younger daughter Rosalie.

Woodbridge: That's a lovely picture.

Steilberg: Well, all you have to do is press the trigger with Mr. Wood; he's just as photogenic as can be.

Woodbridge: This is a book of his thoughts?

Steilberg: Yes, Heavenly Discourse. Here's one where Satan asks for help, and that sort of thing, and God discusses theology. There are a couple of other pictures in here.

Woodbridge: He retired to this place, then?

Steilberg: Yes. He must have been in his eighties; well, I remember he was eighty-three when this was taken. I took this picture before he knew it, and he looked up when he heard the click of the camera.

Woodbridge: How long did he live in that house?

Steilberg: I think he lived there for fifteen years, I guess, almost twenty. He lived there in the early years of the war, about 1943. He was a wonderful person.

This is a picture that I should have had when I talked to the people about St. John's, because that's the barn that I had spoken of. This is made by just taking a picture I had and just adding another one turned over--there you have the whole thing. I mentioned it because this was done in the same fashion that the Swedish barns were built down in San Simeon, using thin pieces of lumber, and bending them. But this is a bit more refined than these were because I'm using a parabolic arch there, whereas they just had something like that, you see.

Woodbridge: Was this a barn that you designed?

Steilberg: Yes, I designed that.

Woodbridge: Where is it?

Steilberg: In Walnut Creek. I don't know exactly where any more.

A barn seemed an interesting problem, and it was, because this was all hay loft; it's just the shape of a hay pile. There was a concrete floor here, and under that were the stalls for cattle and horses. This was all tied together in that floor system, so it was very sturdy too and very inexpensive.

Removing the Monastery from Spain

Steilberg: Well, I'll get to the "music of the day." First, I'll show you something of the terrain there in Spain. (So many people have made completely mistaken and ignorant statements about this thing.) This is the location of it: here's Madrid, and over here, ninety-five miles away, is this little village of Trillio. This river is the Tagus, which goes on down and comes out at Portugal. Up here it's a rather muddy stream; down where it goes under the bridge at Toledo it's quite clear, as I remember.

This lady [Frieda Klussmann] who is responsible for the cable cars in some way got it fixed in her mind that this monastery was "up on a big hill" and it must be put up again "on a big hill." Well, it was nothing of the sort; it was on the flood plain here, you see. I think she had seen the one in New York--The Cloisters there--and it just fixed in her mind that that was the thing to do with it. Well, there wasn't any such location available. This was to have been in Golden Gate Park, across that main street from the park, a hill on the other side. It was a beautiful location.

Woodbridge: Which buildings was it to be near?

Steilberg: You know where the De Young Museum is? Well, the De Young is here, say, and then there's the Japanese Tea Gardens in here, and then there's a main highway coming in this way. Well, there was a hill right over here, a low hill; it wasn't a high hill.

Woodbridge: It's part of the arboretum now.

Steilberg: Yes. You couldn't get any view from that, but Miss Morgan designed it for that place, because she thought it could be a fine place for it. I think she was a little optimistic about it. I worked over the plan and worked out an arrangement whereby there would be a parking lot. Well, she didn't like that. She said she wanted it to be a place where people would walk, as on a pilgrimage [laughs]. People don't walk "as on a pilgrimage" any more--not enough of them, anyway. It would be fine for those of you who did. Anyway, it was never even started.

Woodbridge: Was the site available for it?

Steilberg: At that time, yes.

This is another view of the little town on the ridge. That's quite a nice bridge over there. I came there one day and the flood waters were so high that this bridge couldn't be used. So I had to go by horseback on a trail around in back of it to get in; it was quite a way back.

When they took the stone down from the monastery, it was all placed in the courtyard like this, and marked and numbered, you see. Then it was taken from the courtyard to the river bank.

Woodbridge: On these little carts?

Steilberg: That was a World War I trench railway--little, about so wide, you know.

Woodbridge: It was in existence?

Steilberg: Yes, they picked it up second hand in Paris somewhere.

Then there was the problem of getting across the river. So this is the way it was done: there was a boat like that--sort of a raft--which worked on a pulley and cable across the river. They pointed the cable so it would take advantage of the current of the river; so once they got it on there, it pulled itself across. Here it is across the river [refers to picture], and then it had to be taken up this long incline and loaded at the top there. Here are some more pictures of the loading. I'm showing it to you because it does show what the difficulties were. You see, there's quite a stream there.

Woodbridge: There's the cable, you can see quite clearly, pulling it.

Steilberg: The car that they loaded the stone on was down at the river bank and then pulled up; it had to be pushed and pulled. At the top there was a windlass to help. There the car is coming up. When you consider that there were hundreds of those that had to be taken up there, it was an enormous prospect.

Woodbridge: How long did it take to move all the stone?

Steilberg: I think it was six months or more. One of the problems was that on this river--here's the river and here's the road going up there--we had to build that road. It was about a half a mile in length, I think. That was quite a problem, but the Spanish solved it in that ingenious way; they blasted big chunks of rock from the hill here, and these big chunks of stone came down to this place that had been routed out with a bulldozer. Then the problem was to make paying of them.

There they are making the paying and they have a very ingenious way of doing it. The men all come from the same town in Spain, and they have a tool that I have never seen elsewhere. It looks something like a zucchini squash, like a very large zucchini squash. It's not fastened on a handle, but on a very flexible cable sort of arrangement. It's not quite a cable; you might say it's a cable with some spring in it. But the point is that they'd swing this and not wear themselves out by the impact and it would crush the stone. Of course, they had to know just where to hit it. It was amazing. You'd see a man hit a stone twice as big as that, and it would just fly to pieces.

Woodbridge: They must have had some sort of tradition of rock breaking?

Steilberg: Yes, they all came from the same town.

In one town in Spain, Santa Maria Valle de Iglesias--Santa Maria of the Valley of Churches--they made these colossal jars, which are longer than this, and five or six feet in diameter; and they must have fired them inside and out. I don't know how in the world they did it. I saw some of the big things there. They'd taken the whole length of one of those little Spanish freight cars, which, of course, are not very big, but they'd put one of those on a freight car and that was the load. And then they'd take them off and sell them in these little markets; they'd use them for storing oil and grain too because grass grew on the great prado there.

There you can see those fellows whacking that. It's always interesting to me to see how people without push-button civilization get things done. This was just straight muscle work; muscle

Steilberg: was the prime mover [laughs]. It has its advantages sometimes.

Woodbridge: The picture of the boats on the river is very lovely.

Steilberg: That's a nice picture of the river, I think--that's the Tagus. And here--how prosaic this is--back in the boxing room in Madrid; it could be in anyplace. Here they are bringing some in; these are the crates that have come from the site. Generally they were brought by auto truck, but there were some that were carted in that way. Well, that's pretty much the story of that part of it.

Now, there are some more pictures here you might like to see, of taking apart those crates that were burned, you can see, and the salvaging of that.

Woodbridge: The crates were burned in the park?

Steilberg: Yes.

Woodbridge: Did they ever know what caused the fire?

Steilberg: It could be spontaneous combustion, so the fire chiefs tell me; but there was also a good deal of suspicion of its being incendiary, because the youngsters had been whipped up to a sort of fury by Frieda Klussmann: "Don't let them put any more buildings in the park. We want the park without buildings."

Woodbridge: Oh, I didn't understand, when you said it was the cable car lady. She was against it?

Steilberg: She was very hostile about it, very hostile, and had all these false ideas about where it should be put. She was very active, really responsible, more than anyone else, for the cable cars.

Woodbridge: For having preserved them?

Steilberg: Yes, and I think she was right in that. But she was dead wrong in this one.

[Looking at more pictures.] This little fellow, this Aztec, saved my life. When they were swinging this stone, you see, they'd pull this up out of this pile of rubbish, and sometimes it would swing faster and further than they thought. This boy saw this coming--he was standing right next to me--and he just pushed me over and fell on top of me.

Woodbridge: So it missed you.

Steilberg: Yes. You can see that he's a handsome boy. He was a farming boy. I gave him some of these pictures and he was most pleased.

Here's the crane operator--see the anxiety?

Woodbridge: These are some more postcards of the time.

Steilberg: There's a castle on the hill. There was a chain of fortresses and one of them, this one, was quite near the monastery, and the monastery was part of the fortress system. That was right on the borderline. They have these towers here--typical--and it makes it unpleasant to try to climb up the side of the wall.

Woodbridge: Every other hill had a castle on top of it.

Steilberg: Yes, and the castle roofs all have storks on them.

Well, it was a rough thing to have that just pushed aside.

Woodbridge: I guess that it's virtually hopeless to have anything come of it now.

Steilberg: Well, Mr. Longstreth said that, and he was mistaken, because there is enough there to restore the two best rooms there; there's the chapter house and the refectory. And, as you saw yourself, the refectory is a magnificent room. I don't think they'll ever get any money, though, from Mr. Hearst or any of his people. It'll only come from someone who recognizes that the best of medieval architecture doesn't have to depend on any kind of embellishment at all. It can be just straight structure, and that's what that room is. They have relatively as much as they have for The Cloisters. I have a scheme all worked out for the reconstruction, and for making it earthquake-resistant--I wouldn't say earthquake-proof, there is no such thing.

Woodbridge: You studied the results of the earthquake quite thoroughly, didn't you?

Steilberg: Yes. I belonged to the Seismological Society for many years.

Woodbridge: What kinds of uses did you put your interest to?

Steilberg: I was one of the eight members of the commission which was appointed by the governor to recommend changes in building codes. I've done a lot of earthquake-resistive design, presented papers--

Steilberg: one in Los Angeles to the joint meeting of the Seismological Society, and to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (or some such title, a national thing).

Culvert, Cracks, Concrete, Cement, Campanile, Courtyard

Woodbridge: When you took the pictures in Berkeley, after the quake, was that for your own interest?

Steilberg: After the quake of 1937?

Woodbridge: Yes.

Steilberg: Yes, that was for my own purpose, and also for the city too. For some reason they hush-hushed the whole thing.

Woodbridge: You mentioned that the city did not request any coverage of the earthquake.

Steilberg: No. The fire department had a record of every building that they had changed, or modified, or strengthened, or a chimney torn down, or whatever--anyway, where some damage was done. There were a great many in North Berkeley and very little in South Berkeley. So I thought it was time to know something about it, and I put that to use when I designed the Strawberry Creek culvert--on the bypass there, where that culvert goes across the zone, which at that point is two or three hundred yards wide.

Dr. Louderback,* the geologist here, had made a special study of that fault zone, with his interpretation of the micro-seisms--they are very tiny earthquakes that are not perceptible to human beings. He felt that you could get a much better idea of the location of the fault zones with small movements than you could with one of these heroic things that tears everything to pieces--you never know where it's going.

At the time I did the Strawberry Creek culvert for the University I consulted Dr. Louderback about it and he said, "Well, you should really take care of that in some way, in crossing the fault. You're building the culvert of concrete pipe, I understand." I had had Scobey, the foremost man on the flow of water in pipes and culverts and such things--at that time he was president of the American Society of Civil Engineers--advise me regarding the amount of flow and so on.

*The late Prof. George D. Louderback, who also served as dean of the College of Letters and Science, 1920-1922, 1930-1939. - H.L.

Steilberg: Dr. Louderback said, "If you're crossing the fault zone there with concrete pipe, it seems to me you might easily reduce the hazard by making the pipe, instead of in the usual eight-foot lengths, in four-foot lengths; it would be that much more flexible." It was good reasoning, so that's the way we did it. I haven't been in it in recent years, because this leg is kind of stiff, but I talked with one of the men who did go in it not long ago--this was a year or so ago--and he said that they found in examining the work that I had done there that there was a fine crack in every one of those joints, showing that Louderback had located it properly, right in that zone.

Woodbridge: When you were on the governor's commission to make additions to the building code, was that one of many revisions to the building code?

Steilberg: It was primarily in reference to the school buildings. It was known as Appendix A, which was often considered rather tough, and I think that in some ways it was too stringent, and also there were certain ideas that crept into it through material interests. Portland Cement Association has done a lot of good work, but they also have done some damage by fostering the idea that the more cement you have in something, the better it is. Of course, you can overload a concrete with cement and it will crack all to dickens. They also are erroneous in their ideas that brick work must contain cement in the mortar. Well, thousands of yards of brick work have been laid long before Portland Cement was available; it doesn't follow. I've heard rumors of them tearing down the old powerhouse, near Sather Gate--that beautiful little brick building.

Woodbridge: I don't think they will...

Steilberg: Well, I hope not, because I would as soon be in that building as any building around. But I think someone may have gone in there and picked out a little mortar and had it analyzed: "Oh, there's no cement in this mortar."

You can get very bad brick work with an excess of cement if you're not careful to have your bricks damp but not wet. If the bricks are wet--and lots of times the contractor is careless and just puts a hose on them--and they're put on on a cold morning, you may just have a separation. Masonry is a very fascinating material.

Woodbridge: It seems to me, from what you said, that you have spent a large part of your professional career thinking about concrete and its uses.

Steilberg: I have, and masonry in general.

Sometime I'll show you the work that was done on the Campanile. We had lots of interesting problems there. I was called in on the Campanile when it was observed that it was cracking.

Woodbridge: Which was about when?

Steilberg: I first noticed the cracks about 1923, and it was much later than that, after the war, that I got the definite commission to do it. The cracking had continued: it started in the southwest corner; then it was in the southeast corner; then it was in the northwest corner. The corners that were most exposed to the sun developed the cracks first. And there were some very serious ones, some enormous cracks.

I had the steeplejack go up and he brought down a hatful of fragments that he just picked out of the wall by finger grip, not with tools. They could have fallen at any time and most of them were at least as large as that, and plenty hard enough to go through a tin hat, as far as that goes.

When we were working on it I wanted to get some idea of what the effect would be of a sizable piece of granite, falling on a rope, for instance. So I had the mason purposely push off a piece of granite about the size of my two fists. There was a coil of rope down at the bottom, and it cut that rope just as if it had been cut with a hatchet. So there is real danger there.

Woodbridge: Then you had to put a scaffolding up and re-do--

Steilberg: Yes. Very little work has been done on it; very few of the stones have been taken out. We have put a flower bed around the base, which is a makeshift solution, because there's no telling if the stones will conveniently drop in that flower bed; on the way down they may hit the surface of the Campanile and bounce down.

But that's a very interesting problem. The University sent me East. I visited first the one in Houston and then went to Washington to the Washington Monument; I went up to Bennington and also to Bunker Hill Monument, and I got information from other monuments, like the Erie Monument. In general, there is a tendency for torsion from the heat, but I think in our Campanile here there is a further complication, which was overlooked in the engineering: the engineering was designed to take all of the vertical loads, and certain horizontal loads also; but in the

Steilberg: columns which were steel embedded in concrete, the concrete was poured against the back of the granite.

Somehow, in many cases, the bond of that concrete to the granite was as strong as the granite itself! The bond would hold, and the other material would break. So you get into lots of real complications in a problem like that.

But what the engineer, who was a very dear friend of mine--Professor Derleth--didn't see, apparently, or didn't appreciate fully, was that you couldn't just say to the steel, "Now, you take all the load," when you're incorporating it with a lot of concrete, because the fact is that although the concrete is much less strong--much lower modulus of elasticity than the steel, and therefore the steel will take more per square inch--you have maybe fifty times as much concrete as you have steel. So a lot of it went on the concrete, and from the concrete it went to the stone; and the stone also took as much or more than the concrete, because it's stronger than concrete. So this poor old stone was taking 280 feet of load there, which is quite a load.

In the skyscrapers of New York they have now what they call pressure-relieving joints, so that the masonry is carried by the steel every three or four stories.

Woodbridge: You did some work on California Hall, didn't you?

Steilberg: Just recently, yes. That was merely a matter of introducing another floor for offices there, you see.

Woodbridge: When did you do that?

Steilberg: That was about six or eight years ago. And I did the Hearst Mining Building courtyard; that I did with Michael Goodman.

Woodbridge: That you did when?

Steilberg: That was in '45 or '46, right after the war. It was so early after the war that we didn't even have steel columns for it; we had to make columns by welding together plates, and then have those columns--some full-sized sections--tested to see if they were up to snuff.

Woodbridge: What was the reason for the courtyard?

Steilberg: Just to get more office rooms; and also they had a lot of machinery

Steilberg: set up in there, and a lot of furnaces and so on. The techniques of mining had changed so that they didn't need that big courtyard.

Woodbridge: You gave us the drawings for that, that are upstairs in the archives.

Steilberg: Yes. I had also to look out for this situation: when you have a building that's as old as that--it was fifty years old then, at least--it has taken a certain settlement, in itself as well as in the ground. You have to be very careful that your new building is extra stiff and strong, because otherwise it will suffer.

Woodbridge: You can't put the old wine with the new.

Structural Techniques Over Some Years

Woodbridge: You told me once that you knew Mr. Ransome.

Steilberg: I knew him very slightly. I think it was his son [that I knew], rather than the great Ernest Ransome who devised the concrete mixture and the reinforcing bar, and all that. But that reinforcing bar that Ransome devised is still the best bar--you can't get it any more. (The Germans made a similar bar.) When the Red Hook housing project was done in New York in the mid-thirties, I guess, they were able to use a 30% higher stress in their steel, because they took two bars and twisted them--braided them, you might say--together. Ransome just took a square bar and twisted it. Of course, that was expensive, but it was a definite test of every bar.

Woodbridge: What in your view were some of the accomplishments or the progress in the industry in concrete in the years that you have been using it?

Steilberg: I saw the first reinforced concrete buildings put up in Los Angeles--the Hayward Building and the Auditorium there--and that was in 1904 and '05. There were one or two in San Francisco that were earlier than that, and there were some what you might call experimental buildings, like a sort of tunnel under the driveway in Golden Gate Park that Ransome did.

Woodbridge: Yes, it's an underground walkway. It has stalactites cast in the ceiling; it's a very amusing imitation of a cave.

Steilberg: I didn't know that. I hadn't heard of those. I've never seen them myself.

Woodbridge: It always seemed very amusing to me that he'd gone to the trouble to make it naturalistic in this way.

Steilberg: I don't think that was Ransome. I think that probably the park superintendent wanted something like that.

When I was on the Berkeley board of education I saw to it that his name was down with Edison and some of the other boys who were inventors. The building industry had to get its foot in there too.

Woodbridge: He certainly was a major figure.

Steilberg: Steel beam construction came in, as I think I've told you, at the same time as square-rig shipping was going out. The first building of which I served as superintendent had whole crews who were ex-sailors off the ships.

Woodbridge: There were no longer ships to employ them.

Steilberg: There were only a half a dozen buildings going up in San Francisco at the time, but there were several of them that had all sailor crews. Of course, this foreman said, "Oh, there's nothing to this, compared with going around the Horn in a storm."

Woodbridge: Was he right?

Steilberg: Well, I got out on one of those beams one time, and I was glad to get to the other side. The foreman gave me a lecture about it. He said, "Young fellow, the next time you go out on a beam, go out on your behind; don't go out on your feet." [Laughs.]

Woodbridge: More recently, for example in doing International House, in all the concrete work that you did, did you find that progress kept pace with the buildings as they went along?

Steilberg: Yes, I think that was much better work there. But there was still a lack of understanding about the use of bars, and that persisted for a long time, because I well remember walking over the floors at International House when they just had the steel in place, and in several places I couldn't stick the wood part of a four-inch pencil between the bars. Now, of course, if bars are that close together they're losing a lot; if the bar doesn't

Steilberg: bond with the concrete, if you take off the bond on two sides of it, you're really getting in danger. I found quite a number that way, but you might say the building was "over-designed" anyway. Again, it was this idea that if a pound is good, two pounds are better.

Woodbridge: I'm told that even today, when concrete has advanced enormously technically, buildings still tend to be over-designed, that no one really knows the stresses well enough.

Steilberg: Yes, they do. But there's no excuse for them being badly over-designed, because the techniques have been well established; the Reinforcing Bar Institute has done a good deal in that respect. And the American Concrete Institute--that's another thing I belonged to for many years. I don't know if I have full files of their stuff any more.

I think that the students really ought to acquaint themselves much earlier than they do, and not wait until they get out into the field, and then just think they can pick it up, because they can't. It's an enormous amount of stuff, and if they'd sort of let it seep in as they went along, I think they'd find it much less painful and much more interesting.

Woodbridge: It always struck me as hard to get field experience as a student. There are experiments, of course, and written material...

Steilberg: One thing is to just face the [fact] that you have to begin at the beginning. You may have to go out and take a job as a concrete buggy pusher, or whatever; at any rate, you'd better go out and get your hands dirty if you're going to learn anything about building construction. This business that you can get it all out of a book, and especially out of a classroom...

Woodbridge: There are so few jobs available to students--the building trades are so organized.

Steilberg: That's the fault of the building trades.

Woodbridge: Unions really fill all the jobs.

Steilberg: They do. It's the same thing with carpentry. The unions practically force the use of plywood for exterior sheeting of wood buildings; well, it's a shame because the plywood supply is going so fast that you can't even afford to build any more. Building with one-by-sixes, the sheeting, as we used to, would cost only the extra labor--actually, it would be a little cheaper in the material. But it's only a matter of one or two hundred dollars, and yet they keep depleting the forest just to save that in labor. And the

- Steilberg: unions are responsible for that, because any man who uses a hammer is a carpenter, a journeyman--they get into that rank very quickly. Of course, I think a carpenter ought to have about a six-year apprenticeship. In the meantime they could be used for this work instead of getting--what is it, fifteen dollars an hour? They'd get three dollars an hour; I think that's plenty.
- Woodbridge: Looking back over your work as a structural engineer, what do you regard as major challenges? I know you've mentioned the Berkeley Women's City Club as a major challenge.
- Steilberg: That was, and the Hollywood Studio Club, and the Honolulu--Honolulu was as much of a challenge as the Women's City Club, I think. They were both about the same size, or one was a little larger; but there were other problems there that were...those were both just top-notch jobs.
- Woodbridge: In your field, what was the competition locally, not nationally?
- Steilberg: I think I did do more of what you might call architectural concrete than most of the...[inaudible]...because there is a sort of no-man's land between engineers and architects, and I was partly in that no-man's land. Miss Morgan always used me if she could for that purpose.
- Woodbridge: So did Gardner Dailey?
- Steilberg: Gardner Dailey, yes, and Michael Goodman.
- Woodbridge: Did Michael Goodman do much work in concrete? I know about his plywood houses, that were **very** famous and much published. I always thought they were very innovative.
- Steilberg: I don't know if I remember him doing concrete houses. He wasn't as much interested in architectural expression in concrete as [were] Dailey and Julia Morgan. Miss Morgan was interested more than anyone else--she understood it more than anyone else.
- Woodbridge: How would you account for that?
- Steilberg: I think she comprehended what was going on there.
- Woodbridge: You mean that the wood was vanishing?
- Steilberg: Yes, and also she could get a fireproof building for much less than if it were a steel frame building and then fireproofed. And

Steilberg: she liked the idea that that was the structure, and the other structure wasn't hiding somewhere in the closet.

Woodbridge: There was structural honesty.

Steilberg: Yes, I think she liked that. It has always attracted me more than steel framing. I have done some designing in steel frame, in which the whole thing was exposed, but that was just for small jobs.

Are we going to be locked in here?

Woodbridge: No, we have fifteen more minutes.

I'm trying to assess the peaks and the valleys in your career. I wondered if there were any other things?

Steilberg: I think that I have had long distancedreams, and probably to date most of them have not been realized. I know that was true of Mr. Hearst and Julia Morgan and Armand Mercier, and I think it was also true of Chief Justice Earl Warren. I had the pleasure of working--arguing--with him for an afternoon one time, for a few hours, and I find him a very interesting man.

Woodbridge: On what occasion?

Steilberg: Regarding the Berkeley schools. It was interesting and I got a glimpse then of what he was after; he was going to get a better deal for everybody, I thought.

The principal long distance dream that I have had came after the Berkeley fire, and that's described in that little pamphlet that I wrote on what I call Fabricrete. I have a copy you can look at. Then I found that I didn't have the capital to push that further myself, so I teamed up with the Pacific Coast Aggregate in promoting the type of block that they were making. The architectural library was of that, and that was my design, architecture as well as engineering. And it was done for a very, very low cost.

Woodbridge: What was the nature of Fabricrete.

Steilberg: That was a method of getting a concrete wall by directing these sets of reinforced bars at two-foot intervals. I chose the two-foot interval because that corresponds to...[end of tape]*

*Further explained by Ed. Hussey. See Hussey interview. - S.R.

XI JULIA MORGAN [3]

The Seldon Williams House , 2821 Claremont

- Woodbridge: This morning I was asking you about the Seldon Williams house. You had set up your own office at that time.
- Steilberg: I had not anything to do with that at all. I don't know whether I would have talked her out of using those dangerous gimmicks on the outside.
- Woodbridge: Which ones were those?
- Steilberg: It was these rather fancy capitals [draws on paper], and then these went off something like that, you know--cusped arches. All of this was a lot of difficult and fancy joinery, all cast stuff. These things are not adapted to earthquake resistance.
- Woodbridge: The money was Glide money, as I understand it.
- Steilberg: Was it? I know that she did work for the Glides for a long time. There's a house right up by where Eucalyptus Road butts into another road there that is one of the Glide residences, I think [Elliott home]. I remember that being very carefully detailed in the office.
- Woodbridge: That was somewhere on Eucalyptus?
- Steilberg: #1 Eucalyptus Road. I thought it was quite a good house of its type--a derivative of English houses.
- Woodbridge: Was it a half-timbered house?
- Steilberg: Moderately, yes, in the second story, and there was some very beautifully detailed decorative plaster work on the outside of it; it's all covered with vines, though. But it was very well done.

- Woodbridge: Did you work on any of the houses that Miss Morgan did for the Glides?
- Steilberg: No, I don't think so. I did work on a large brick house over in the Rockridge district, the Wells house.
- Woodbridge: I know that house--a very large brick house, and a very large lot, with a very fancy gate entrance.
- Steilberg: Yes, I did work on that. I was there when this gentleman came into the office, and I happened to be in the library with her at the time. He spoke as if he were speaking to both of us and said, "You know, the thing I'm really interested in having is some balconies like those we saw in Sicily. I've brought you a photograph to show you what I want."
- Woodbridge: He didn't have any thoughts about the house, but he was interested in balconies! It does have wrought iron balconies.
- Steilberg: I detailed them.
- Woodbridge: I see, to evoke the Sicilian balconies.
- Steilberg: We had some difficulties with that house. He liked the color of southern gumwood for the interior.
- Woodbridge: That's a pine gum?
- Steilberg: No, it's a different tree; it's a deciduous tree.
- Woodbridge: Oh, sweet gum.
- Steilberg: Yes. They have a lot of it in the East. It's very difficult to get in place, and apparently the contractor who was doing the house had never had experience with gum, because I went out there one Sunday and the stairwell had twisted so that you couldn't go up the stairs; it just curled right around and you had to crawl under it to get up the stairs. They had to take that down and make it in pieces and veneer, and so on.

I was there one time when Miss Morgan was there trying to advise them on the colors. She had a horror of interior decorators coming in and spoiling a house and of landscapists who were not really trained. There was some argument and Miss Morgan, I could see, was getting a little warm about it. She looked out the window with a funny little smile on her face and said, "Well, it seems to me that there's quite a nice vision right outdoors. The

- Steilberg: bark of the eucalyptus tree is very beautiful and so are the colors, and the leaves are two different colors. Couldn't you find something in that?" As they say, bring the outside inside.
- Woodbridge: I suppose she would be naturally opposed to flowered chintzes and so on...
- Steilberg: I think so, on the ground that flowered chintzes are made by the mile on the machine.
- Woodbridge: Her taste in interiors, I would imagine, was relatively spartan and simple.
- Steilberg: Yes, and quiet, but not brutal, not the gunny sack fashion type of thing.
- Woodbridge: Did she ever employ painters or muralists or anyone to treat walls?
- Steilberg: Not that I know of, excepting the only one I know of, Mr. Solon, who did all the murals in the top floor of San Simeon castle. And I think he did a much better job than the others that were brought in there. Some of the tapestries are very fine, but some of those Renaissance tapestries they can have, as far as I'm concerned.
- Woodbridge: I understand the Williams house had painted murals on the inside of it.*
- Steilberg: I didn't know that; I haven't been in it at all. I don't think she would have balked at all if it were a competent man. Solon was a very competent man. He came from a French family who are among the first of the great French ceramic artists; there's a book by Solon about ceramics. One of the Solon brothers was down in San Jose and had a very prospering tile factory there for some time and did very good work.
- Woodbridge: She was interested in tile work.
- Steilberg: Yes, she was interested in all sorts of crafts. I don't think she cared very much for the batcheldered [?] tiles that they made in Pasadena. They were all burned, you know; they got their effect by being burned. [Laughing.] She didn't go for the arty work that was uncooked.
- Woodbridge: There was a story someone told me about the director of the YWCA in Oakland--that when the tiles came, Julia Morgan sat and sifted

*Frescoes by Maxine Albro in the loggia. - S.R.

Woodbridge: through whole piles of them to pick out the ones that were good, out of hundreds.

Steilberg: I'm quite willing to believe that. She never spared herself when it was a question of quality to be decided. After the first serious fire, the stones were stored back of the De Young Museum, and she went out there day after day and made sketches of these fragments, in the hope that they could be used some-time. I gave those sketches to the University. We used them in making the drawings.

Her Dedication and Her Admirations

Woodbridge: You've given me the idea, and I'm sure others have too, that she thought nothing of working eighteen hours a day, drinking black coffee.

Steilberg: No, not at all. But she seemed more inclined to take oyster stew. She often went to San Simeon on the eight o'clock train, and got out at San Luis Obispo, and then went out with the mail automobile in the morning, so she would have an hour or two to sit in the railway restaurant there where they have very good food: homemade bread, and ham and eggs, and that sort of things.

I asked the cook one time, just as a matter of curiosity, what she took when she came there after that long ride on the train, when I knew she'd not had anything since breakfast but a few Lifesavers. [The cook said], "Well, you know, she asked the railroad engineers one time. The trains meet here, you know, and the two crews come in here and have a bite. First only the men who had to take the cars over the hill would come in. It was a nervewracking job, you know; that's the crookedest railroad in the world up there and you can see yourself coming back in some places. After a while, the boys who came down the hill with the train took the same thing, which was a large bowl of bread and milk, to get over the nerves. [Miss Morgan], too, said, 'Give me a bowl of bread and milk.'" I think she did fortify herself with ham and eggs after that, but I know she greatly admired people like that.

Woodbridge: You told me that she greatly admired personal courage.

Steilberg: Yes, like Mr. Rossi [second superintendent at San Simeon] going to Mexico to fight bulls on his vacation, and then making a pet

Name: JULIA MORGAN of San Francisco, California
 Born: Jan. 26, 1872 at Oakland, Calif. Died: Feb. 2, 1957 at San Francisco, Calif.
 Parents: William Morgan and Eliza Woodward Morgan
 Married: No
 Children: None; however, she had a maternal attitude toward those she considered worth keeping in her office; and a grand-maternal memory for their children.
 Education: B.S. College of Civil Engineering Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris
 University of California, 1894 Atelier Chaussemiche
 Many trips to Europe, Mexico, South and Central America and Hawaiian Islands

Training and Practice: Craftsman for John Galen Howard (on Greek Theatre, U.C.) and for Bernard Maybeck
 (residences)

Established own office, general practice, San Francisco 1905, Ira W. Hoover associated 1909-1910. Retired 1950.

Professional Memberships and Service: Teaching: Her office was, in itself, a post-graduate school. Every job was studied from start of sketches to finish of construction, and after completion every building was reviewed quite objectively in a persistent effort to improve function, form, and structure.

Affiliations:

Baptist Church, Oakland
 Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority; Omega Chapter; University of California
 Member of American Institute of Architects, 1921.

Public Service:

Design of Hostess Houses at Military Camps, World War I

Published Material and Executed Work:

Very little of her work has been published (Architect & Engineer, Nov. 1918)
 Julia Morgan believed that architecture is an art of form, not an art of words. She was not given to talking, writing, or gesturing about her profession. Her criticisms were made in the form of quick but very definite sketches; to which she sometimes added this quotation from her friend and teacher Bernard Maybeck: "If you strike a difficulty don't shy away from it; maybe it's an opportunity in disguise; and you can make a feature of it."

She was a decade or two ahead of most of her contemporaries in using structure as a means of architectural expression--in both timber and reinforced concrete. Possibly her studies in civil engineering led her to the invaluable habit of asking the collaboration of her structural engineer in the early sketch stage of any project.

Following is a list of her principal accomplishments:

Clubs and Hotels

Berkeley Women's City Club; Hollywood Studio Club; Emanu-El Residence Club, San Francisco; Y.W.C.A. buildings in Oakland, Pasadena, Long Beach, San Francisco, Fresno, Salt Lake City, Honolulu; Margaret Baylor Inn, Santa Barbara; "Asilomar" (near Monterey) Dining Hall, Guest Houses, Chapel.

Schools and College Buildings:

Miss Burke's School, San Francisco
 Ransome & Bridges School, Piedmont
 Mills College: Campanile, Library, Gymnasium, Recreation Building, Ming Quong School
 University of California, Berkeley: Senior Women's Hall; Y.W.C.A.; Women's Gymnasium (in collaboration with Bernard Maybeck)
 Berkeley Baptist Divinity School
 Principia College, Illinois (in collaboration with Bernard Maybeck): General Plan, Chapel and Dormitories

JULIA MORGAN - continued:

Hospitals:

Awahnee Tubercular Hospital
 Santa Barbara Hospital
 S.F. Ladies Protection and Relief Society
 Kings Daughters Home, Oakland

Churches:

St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley
 United Presbyterian Church, Oakland
 Methodist Chinese Mission, San Francisco
 Chapel of the Chimes, Piedmont

Columbaria:

California Columbarium, Oakland
 Hilo Columbarium, Hawaii

Commercial Buildings:

Turner Store and office buildings in Piedmont and Berkeley; including Black Sheep restaurant.

Residences:

Several dozen houses in Northern California,--ranging in size from small week-end cottages to large city houses and country estates. Her largest residential jobs (but not her best) are the estates of the late W. R. Hearst at San Simeon, Santa Monica, Jolon, Pleasanton, and Wyntoun.

Museum:

San Francisco Museum of Medieval Art which was to have incorporated the masonry of the chapel, chapter house, refectory and cloister of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila (Spain), given to the city by Mr. Hearst (since largely destroyed by fire).

In 1929 the University of California conferred upon Julia Morgan the degree of L.L.D. One of her greatest honors has come since her death; more than fifty of her friends, former employees, and clients have donated more than \$14,000 toward the founding of a scholarship in her name in the U.C. College of Architecture; there is definite prospect that this fund will be increased from the same sources until it permanently provides an annual award of about \$1,000.

Julia Morgan's long and useful life is evidence that even in these frantic times an architect of real ability and dedicated purpose can,--without resorting to either publicity tricks or a display of egotism,--contribute much to the advancement of the profession and leave a beloved and honored memory.

Note: At the request of the American Institute of Architects in 1957 I wrote this brief outline for the A.I.A. Archives in Washington.

W. T. S.

WALTER T. STEILBERG
 CONSULTING ARCHITECT
 2001 BROADWAY, SUITE 1000
 NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001
 (212) 691-1100

Steilberg: of this leopard that Mr. Hearst had. When Mr. Rossi saw the leopard, he said, "Oh, I have to make a pet of him right away." So the poor leopard didn't have a chance.

Woodbridge: So Miss Morgan admired this.

Steilberg: And also she expected the men to be masculine. I'm sure she wouldn't have admired the interior decorator I had on one of her jobs. I was down at Los Gatos inspecting a job for Mrs. Huntington. I was doing a house down there with a teakwood ceiling. Why they made it of teak I don't know, but that's what it was. An interior decorator was brought into the job. Just how it happened, I don't know; it wasn't through Miss Morgan, I'm sure. The painter had made a number of samples, and the contractor was there--Mr. Grace, a sort of tough-spoken Irishman. The interior decorator said, "Oh, no, no. That won't do. I want an altogether different color, a sort of 'looking down the well' color."

We all started to laugh, and Mr. Grace was equal to the occasion. He said, "Well, right over here is a well. Why don't we go over there and see what color it is." The painter said, "You come along too; we'll see how you look down the well." So we all went over there, and we all looked down the well. We came back, and the painter fooled around with the paints, and I think he used principally raw umber with a touch of gray. The interior decorator said, "That's just right."

Family and Client Relations

Woodbridge: Do you have any theories as to why Julia Morgan never married?

Steilberg: I guess, for one thing, the right man never came along. She was a handsome woman. When I first went into her office she was about forty. As you can see [refers to picture], she was striking.

Woodbridge: It always seemed to me as she was described that she had no time for men in the social sense.

Steilberg: As far as I know, she just sort of led a social [sic] life.

Woodbridge: Of course, in order to meet a man, to marry him, and to have a life with him, she would have had to give up a great deal of her practice.

Steilberg: You can see that in the divorce records; there are more divorced architects than there are married ones.

Woodbridge: I suppose, as you said, that she didn't move in a social whirl.

Julia Morgan's family--I believe you said her father was a mining engineer?

Steilberg: That was my understanding, yes.

Woodbridge: Were there only two daughters?

Steilberg: I think so, yes. And she had two brothers that I know of. Avery was the one who was in the office for a time. He was in frail health and he couldn't stand the tension of the drafting room, which can be pretty tense.

Woodbridge: Was he an architect?

Steilberg: He'd had some training in that field. So she took him out of the office again and he acted as her chauffeur for a long time. She had a Hudson, which was then a big car, and he drove her around to various jobs. If it was at all possible, she'd see a job at least a couple of times a week.

Woodbridge: That must have been when she had a lot of work.

Steilberg: She worked very efficiently. The office actually was a very efficient office--much more efficient than most offices--because when she gave us a plan it was there, you know, and it would work. With some architects, when you were supposed to get people up-stairs, there was no way of doing it except with a block and tangle and pulley outside.

Woodbridge: Was Avery older or younger than she?

Steilberg: Younger, and then there was another brother, older, who was killed in a fire; he was an enthusiastic fireman.

Woodbridge: He was the oldest child, then her sister, and then herself, and then Avery.

Steilberg: I think so.

Woodbridge: Was Avery schooled here at the University?

Steilberg: No, not at the school. I think he did some work in Paris. I don't know that he was actually in the École. People have a generally mistaken idea of the École des Beaux Arts; they think of it as a big university like this. Of course, there is a school of architecture where they have the lectures and all.

Woodbridge: Did Julia Morgan have some sort of social relations with her clients, or were they largely business?

Steilberg: As far as I know, they were mostly business. There were some families she liked very much; the Rideout family of Marysville she liked very much. And then she would take a liking to someone because, as nearly as I can fathom it, a client was completely candid with her. Mr. Wells was perfectly straightforward; he said what he wanted, but he wasn't going to be bulldoggish about it or insistent. So were the Rideouts.

Then there was the family of Mr. Exeter, a clothing merchant. He told me, "There's one thing I'd like to have in my house. It gets cold as hell up in Marysville--that may be the wrong comparison, but that's the way I think of it anyway--and I sort of dread getting up in the morning. I don't like to have the heater on all the time, so I'd like to have a heater I could just plug in." I said, "Well, you can just reach up and switch it on right here." He said, "Oh, I don't want to reach out. I want the plug right on one of those long push-button things right under my pillow."

You can see what you get in clients sometimes. Those quirks she didn't mind in people if they were straightforward about it.

Woodbridge: Did she turn away clients if she didn't think they would work out?

Steilberg: Yes. I don't know if she did it in that way. I think she tried. I know there was one man who built a house in North Berkeley. He was an awful trial to her, I'm sure, but I think she still went through with the house. She had some queer ones, I'll tell you.

Woodbridge: I don't think of her as an eccentric designer, and I wondered what she did with people who were eccentric?

Steilberg: I don't think she had them around very long. They didn't work for her very long.

Woodbridge: No, I mean clients who were eccentric.

Steilberg: I don't think the eccentric ones came to her very much, although I would certainly classify Mr. Hearst as one, but that was different.

The Chapel of the Chimes

Woodbridge: You mentioned the Chapel of the Chimes this morning. Was that one of her last things?

Steilberg: No, it wasn't. I did the structure way back in 1926 and there were additions to it later. I thought her idea of these gardens going up was very nice, and the skylights that rolled back so you could have an open court in there with these places for the urns and so on. But I don't know how she got into this decorative squeeze on it, these complicated...

Woodbridge: Sort of neo-Gothic ornament really proliferated all through it.

Steilberg: Yes. A little of that goes a long way. If those were all hand done--but if you take several hundred of those, then they can really get on your nerves; at least they get on mine.

Woodbridge: I think that was one of her least successful and least typical works. You mentioned that you did the structures on the main chapel, but there is a series of little chapels.

Steilberg: I don't know whether I did the structures, but the bones of all of that I did. Then they came in with this cast stone stuff. I made what provision I could for anchoring it, but you can't anchor a stone pile like that.

Woodbridge: It's quite large, it seems to me, as a structure.

Steilberg: Yes. She turned the work over to Dick Nussbaum first. He was an architectural draftsman, a little hunchback who worked for Miss Morgan for a long time. I think she took him in because he was afflicted. He had a little stand he worked on. He was quite a character; he was a wonderful person. He was a draftsman, but not as proficient as Thaddeus Joy; he was primarily a decorator--ornament work. He went to Mexico on a trip once--Miss Morgan urged him to go--and he came back with the most wonderful series of photographs. I can understand why, because he was so friendly to everyone, and the Mexicans saw he was afflicted, and they are very kindly people and just took him right into their homes. Have you been to Mexico?

Woodbridge: Once, but years ago.

Steilberg: It's nearly twenty years since I've been there. It's a marvelous country, and marvelous people.

Woodbridge: How did she happen to get the commission for the Chapel of the Chimes? It seems to me that was a bit out of her line.

Steilberg: I've forgotten now. Mr. Moore was the head of it, and I think she had done a house for him, or some such thing. I don't know how she got these other churches. I don't know that she did any Baptist churches, but she did a lot of Presbyterian churches.

The Business of Running the Office

Steilberg: Gardner Dailey worked quite briefly in Miss Morgan's office because we--and I say "we" because Miss Morgan always spoke of it that way--couldn't afford to pay him an apprentice's wages, and he had to get out and get something more. I don't know just where he went then. I think he went into business for himself, the nursery business.

But Gardner had been working for Mc Laren in the Golden Gate Park business. Miss Morgan gave Gardner a job on the Turner store out in Piedmont; it's still there. She said, "You have been around trees and plants and flowers. Why don't you full-size this in the way you would like to do it. Don't follow what the Florentines did--the pines and just the things they did all the time; put up whatever vegetation you want in there." He did a beautiful job, and if you could see it out there, it's a polychrome terra cotta. I sent it to him and to her as a Christmas card one time.

Woodbridge: I suppose she naturally had a wage scale in her office--she paid apprentice wages and draftsmen wages?

Steilberg: Yes. I remember the apprentices were paid ten dollars a week and we lost money on them for a year.

Woodbridge: It would depend on her work load, but how many people did she have in the office?

Steilberg: I've never seen more than eight men in her main office in the Merchant's Exchange. There wasn't room for any more, especially with the work that she did. She full-sized so many things, you see.

Woodbridge: Was she always in the Merchant's Exchange?

- Steilberg: All the time that I've known her, yes. She had an office first on the thirteenth floor, and then had to move down to the eleventh. And then I think she moved to the eighth floor to a little single office. That was after she had no one working for her; she had her books there and came up to work there.
- Woodbridge: There was no question of her training someone to take over the office?
- Steilberg: No. Mr. Lefeaver* did some specifications for her and I think some business management, but I don't know how much business managing there was; there wasn't very much because she did most of it. She comes as close to being a one-man architect as anyone I've ever known.
- Woodbridge: She did manage her own business affairs?
- Steilberg: Yes. And another extraordinary trait she had was that she was one of the worst spellers I've ever encountered. The funny part of it was that lots of times I would correct something in the specifications that she'd misspelled, and she would gasp and write it back in [laughs].
- Woodbridge: Did you dare to tell her that that was wrong?
- Steilberg: I did sometimes, but I found that she was sort of hurt by it. It's strange, because she was so understanding in so many things; she just didn't have a sense of spelling. I can spell well, but it's just a faculty, that's all.
- Woodbridge: You also said that she wasn't much of a reader.
- Steilberg: I don't think she was a novel reader, or a political science reader; only architectural things have I seen her read. I think I told you that she was very fascinated with the Chinese characters.
- Woodbridge: We've talked before about her interest in oriental and Chinese art. When she was able to influence a client's choice of interiors, did she ever suggest an oriental decor?
- Steilberg: I don't think so. I don't think she liked the idea of chinoiserie.
- Woodbridge: I just meant things such as occur in your work: the door mouldings are modified and the window mullions are modified.
- Steilberg: No, I don't remember her ever doing that. Here's a very simple case of my ventures into Chinese work: you have a door casing

*The late James Lefeaver, architect and lifelong friend. - H.L.

- Steilberg: like this [refers to drawing]. It's always a mean job to make this join at that point; so the last several houses I've done, I've always done that. I don't think she ever did that. She felt it was treason to the grace, or something, I guess. But that is purely a utilitarian device on my part, but I think it's a good one.
- Woodbridge: I didn't mean to imply that either you or she would copy an oriental device. I was thinking of the understanding of the way the Chinese detailed things, and appreciating that in detailing.
- Steilberg: I think she would appreciate this quality in Chinese detail: the sense of touch. I know she would have been very much distressed by the horrible rails they have on BART, which are sharper than this; you go down those BART stairs and you hurt your hands every time you touch them. Why didn't someone realize that handrails have been well designed for a thousand years? There's no need to go out of your way to make them ugly.
- Woodbridge: Everyone subscribed to architectural publications--magazines and journals--and I assume that she did too, because you said she had a library.
- Steilberg: Yes, she did subscribe to the magazines, but I don't think she subscribed to all of them. I know that she was interested in the Architect and Engineer, which was a good magazine for the west coast; I think it compared very favorably with the east coast magazines of the time. They didn't have much to draw on, but what they did, they did well.
- Woodbridge: What was everyone's attitude about the architecture that was being done in the East?
- Steilberg: We seldom had any reference that way. There were people who came in and wanted a house that was Cape Cod colonial, or something like that, but very few came in with magazines with pictures. Some would come in with photographs, or, as Mr. Lombard did, with a complete watercolor painting that an English architect had made for him.
- Woodbridge: You told me once that when clients came to see Miss Morgan and were a little at sea, she often sat them down in her library and gave them things to look at. What sorts of things?

Steilberg: There were some pictures of her own work, I think. She didn't have many. In general, she interviewed them herself. I was rarely in there--a few times when Mr. Hearst was there, and I was there when Mr. Wells was there, and a few others, but then I just happened to be there, I wasn't called in.

Bernard Maybeck, Willis Polk, and Some Others

Woodbridge: I think you mentioned once that she greatly admired Charles Adam Platt.

Steilberg: Yes. She referred us to Platt's work, much to the astonishment of those of us who had come from the University here, more than to Mc Kim and White's work. Mc Kim and White were much better known because of publicity; Platt's work had not been published in the magazines much until his book came out. But she thought his work was very wonderful. I think it is too.

Woodbridge: Were there other contemporary architects that she often spoke of in that way?

Steilberg: She spoke of Mr. Maybeck always with great affection and admiration. She thought a great deal of Maybeck.

Woodbridge: His work and her work are quite different, though. She was never moved to copy him?

Steilberg: No. She told me sometimes, "See if you can't get a little more of the feeling of Mr. Maybeck" in something.

Woodbridge: What did that mean, I wonder?

Steilberg: Perhaps a little more like what you see in some of Mr. Maybeck's houses, like the Price house near me.

Woodbridge: Was that a quality of inventiveness, or a quality of warm woodiness, or informality?

Steilberg: I think she appreciated the fact that he was a good planner too. His houses were very well planned and his buildings were well planned. The Palace of Fine Arts is one of the best pieces of planning; compare it to some of the tombs in which they put art around the country.

- Woodbridge: Then she admired his qualities of organization and concept...
- Steilberg: She thought he was very large in his field.
- Woodbridge: I have called to mind other architects who were in the area at that time. We talked once of Ernest Coxhead.
- Steilberg: I don't remember her speaking of Coxhead, but she may have. I'm sure she did not feel his work was as good as Mr. Maybeck's. I don't think it was either.
- Woodbridge: You knew him, didn't you?
- Steilberg: Just slightly.
- Woodbridge: Was his architectural reputation comparable to Miss Morgan's?
- Steilberg: No. He had a small office too. They [Almeric and Ernest Coxhead] were brothers. I think they did most of the pencil pushing themselves.
- Woodbridge: But they didn't have a large reputation?
- Steilberg: No. The only large building they had around here was the Home Telephone building.
- Woodbridge: They did do a number of houses in the area. How did people feel about their houses?
- Steilberg: I don't know. I thought they were very good. I thought the Rieber house was one of the best houses in this area, and also the Torrey house.
- Woodbridge: In comparison with Willis Polk, who was a flamboyant character; I suppose he would be more talked about.
- Steilberg: Yes. If no one else talked about him, he'd do it himself.

I've never forgotten, though, Willis Polk's fine gesture at the time of the Palace of Fine Arts. Here was this self-centered little s.o.b., as many people called him, with the job himself of designing the Palace of Fine Arts. He showed his friend Maybeck--Mr. Maybeck was always trying to reform Mr. Polk in an entirely friendly way--these sketches. (Chesley Bonestell told me this story; he was there at the time.) Maybeck says, "No, I don't think that's a good solution, Willis.

Steilberg: Let me have the facts in the case--the whole plan, not before you fill in this mudhole, as you call it, but the entire plan, and the number of galleries, and so on. Let me see what I can do with it; I'd much rather make a positive criticism than a negative one."

So Maybeck worked on it over the weekend and he came in on Monday, and Bonestell said he just rolled his drawings out and said to Polk, "Now, listen, this thing that you call a mudhole, that's your opportunity: you can make a reflecting mirror of that. And it'll serve another purpose: when the crowds come down this great esplanade from among the other buildings, they won't rush right into the presence of art; they'll slow down a little bit and go around that. Make a reflecting pool of it, and then put the colonnades in here so they come around into the presence of art slowly.

"And then you'll put this big dome in this place; that's not housing anything in particular, so it might be well to just make something very small so that people will see how enormous the architecture is, and they'll be slowed up a little bit. They'll go into the galleries tamed down a bit. Then when they're in there they won't go 'squads right' and 'squads left'; they'll go around and see sculpture in different lights. It'll make a pleasanter building, I think." Polk said to Mr. Maybeck, "Maybeck, the job's yours. Go ahead and do it."

Woodbridge: Just like that. Well, he was right, certainly.

Steilberg: Yes, he was. I thought Maybeck's description of the thing was just...that's architecture.

Woodbridge: Did Polk and Maybeck consult with each other about many projects?

Steilberg: I don't know; they may have. I sometimes see a touch of more imagination in Polk's work than some of it has, and it might be a touch of Maybeck.

Woodbridge: Did Julia Morgan and Maybeck consult?

Steilberg: Oh, yes.

Woodbridge: Did she take work of hers to him for criticism?

Steilberg: No, she didn't do that--she may have done that on the sly, I

- Steilberg: don't know.. But I know they were very good friends. The last drawings I saw of hers and Mr. Maybeck's were some sort of a tremendous entrance to some cemetery somewhere.
- Woodbridge: They collaborated on the gymnasium. Was that a fruitful collaboration as far as you know?
- Steilberg: I think Miss Morgan had quite a time with him because he couldn't see any reason why the women had to have separate showers, any more than men had to have separate showers [laughs]. She had quite a time with him on that.
- Woodbridge: I was always interested in who did what on the gym.
- Steilberg: The main concept of the pool and those buildings--the exterior appearance and, I'm afraid, also the interior--were done by Julia Morgan because Maybeck didn't have a structural engineer who was sympathetic to the architectural expression of structural forms. Those were by Mr. Huber, who was a very dear friend of mine, and I'm not criticizing his structure, I'm criticizing his architecture.
- Woodbridge: In other words, she was responsible for the framing of the building--the structure of it.
- Steilberg: Yes.
- Woodbridge: What was Maybeck's contribution?
- Steilberg: Well, I think the exterior--the general plan, I'm quite sure, of the several pools, some on the south, and another big one on the north side.
- Woodbridge: And the interior disposition of spaces?
- Steilberg: Yes.
- Woodbridge: I always thought that those big urns must have been his, because that looks like his work.
- Steilberg: I think so. It's a tradition that comes from Paris. You can see it in Sather Gate--those big urns there.
- Woodbridge: Maybeck didn't have an office, did he?
- Steilberg: Oh, yes. He had a couple of rooms in the Russ Building. It was a small office; the whole office space he had was two offices.

Woodbridge: I wondered if something like the gymnasium would be done in her office.

Steilberg: I believe most of the drawings were done in her office, because she had a much larger space.

Woodbridge: And Mr. Huber did the structural work on it?

Steilberg: Yes, in his own office, which was a large office. The drawings made for Principia, the Christian Science Church college, were made in Julia Morgan's office. Ed Hussey [was superintendent], a boy I put in Miss Morgan's office. He had worked for me, so I recommended him. He was a master superintendent; he was a wonderful superintendent.

The same thing in Honolulu—he was superintendent there in 1926. I was over and had to do some trouble-shooting there because the foundations had to be completely redesigned, which I did while I stayed there for several weeks. The boy who was there, who Miss Morgan had sent over, was quite inadequate, so I said to please send me Hussey. And she did. He went from there afterwards to Japan and to New Zealand.

Did I tell you the story about the plea the students made for Ed Hussey? Ed is very religious; he doesn't believe in working on Sunday. The schedule was that you'd get your last criticism on Friday and you'd have to render on Tuesday. Well, that's awfully short time to make all these drawings.

Woodbridge: This is in the architecture school?

Steilberg: Yes. Ed did not want to work on Sunday. So the other people in the class went to Mr. Howard and said, "Mr. Howard, we think that Ed should be allowed another day." I always thought that was the evidence of a gentleman.*

End of Interview

*Mr. Hussey explains: "We'd have about three projects during a semester, so we would work for many weeks on one project, and we'd always keep thinking, well, maybe we could improve it, so it was usually the last week before we'd start the final drawing, which was due at 5:00 on Saturday. (One time on my drawing, on Thursday night until Saturday night I only had three hours sleep--by the way, the only time I ever got first place.) For one very tall office building everyone knew they would not be finished by Saturday night, so they all applied to Professor Howard and he granted them one day extra: 5:00 Sunday would be the deadline. They knew I didn't work on Sunday and they asked what I would do. I said I would just turn it in late, on Monday, though they take off value for being late. I didn't suggest it at all, but they went to Howard and made the arrangement. I worked till midnight Saturday and then I climbed in the window early Monday morning and finished it."

San Francisco Examiner, Sunday, December 8, 1974

W. T. Steilberg dies; San Simeon designer

Walter T. Steilberg, the noted Berkeley architect who collaborated on the design of the late William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon home, died yesterday at Herrick Memorial Hospital in Berkeley.

Mr. Steilberg, a long time Berkeley resident and a contemporary of such building designers as Julia Morgan and Bernard Maybeck, died of injuries sustained Tuesday when he was hit by a car. He was 88.

During his long career, he served as a member of the Berkeley Board of Education; was involved in a number of large design projects and aided in the preservation of both the University of California's Campanile and a Spanish monastery.

He worked with Mrs. Morgan on the design of San Simeon for the founder of the Hearst newspapers.

He later supervised the dismantling and shipment of the Monastery of Santa Marin de Oliva in Spain. The building was shipped to San Francisco as a gift to The City from Mr. Hearst, but was never reassembled.

A native of Louisville, Ky., he graduated with a degree in architecture from U.C. Berkeley in 1910. He helped

design a number of structures on every University of California campus.

Later he formed his own firm and designed the Berkeley College Women's Club, Claremont Junior High School in Oakland, the pavilion at Lake Merritt and other projects in Hawaii and Saudi Arabia.

He was a past member of the American Institute of Architects, the Seismological Institute and the Concrete Institute of America.

He is survived by his wife, the former Elizabeth Ferguson; daughters Helena Lawton and Rosalie Dwyer; a nephew, Otto Reutinger; seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

No funeral service is planned. The family prefers memorial contributions be sent to the University of California.

Architect Steilberg dies from injuries

Walter T. Steilberg, 88, widely known Berkeley architect and a former member of the Board of Education, has succumbed to injuries suffered in automobile accident here.

Steilberg, who had served many years as architectural and engineering consultant for the University of California, was an authority on earthquake-proof construction, a field he pioneered in the 1930's. He had been scheduled to consult this week with UC about the Campanile.

MR. STEILBERG died Friday. No services are planned, but memorial contributions may be made to UC-Berkeley.

A graduate of the class of 1910 at UC-Berkeley, Mr. Steilberg subsequently joined the late John Galen Howard's office and participated in the design of Wheeler Hall, the UC Library, and the president's house.

After becoming a member of the late Julia Morgan's firm, he formed his own office in the early '20s and designed many Bay Area residences and public buildings, including the Berkeley College Women's Club, Claremont Junior High School and the pavilion at Lake Merritt.

His association with Julia Morgan continued throughout her lifetime. In addition to his own practice, he acted as architectural engineer and structural consultant for most of her designs, including the Hearst estate at San Simeon.

DURING THE 1930s, Steil-

berg served on the Berkeley Board of Education.

During World War II he was with the U.S. Navy on Kodiak Island as both structural engineer and teacher.

He also served as engineering consultant for ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia during the '50s.

Aside from buildings of his own design, his best-known architectural project, commissioned by the late William Randolph Hearst, was the dismantling, stone-by-stone, of a Gothic monastery in Spain, to be reassembled in California. (Due to Hearst's subsequent loss of interest, the project was never completed; a large portion of the stones, stored outside the De Young Museum, were destroyed by fire several years ago.)

He was born in Louisville, Ky. and grew up on a ranch near San Diego. He had an abiding interest in Chinese art and crafts and was planning a book on the topic.

STEILBERG'S affiliations included past membership in the AIA, American Seismological Institute and the Concrete Institute.

Survivors include his widow, Elizabeth V. Steilberg, former psychiatric social worker, and two daughters, Helena Lawton of Berkeley and Rosalie Dwyer of Sacramento.

He leaves seven grandchildren — David, Randal, Nicholas and Roger Lawton and Joanna, Jonathon and Martha Dwyer, and four great-grandchildren.

WALTER STEILBERG, FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR: An Interview with Robert Ratcliff and Evelyn Paine Ratcliff, 9 January 1975.

Robert R.: The first time I went to Walter Steilberg for assistance on an architectural matter was interesting. I was in the student architectural association at the University, as most of the students were, and I was elected president. I was elected because I was more vocal than the rest of them in objecting to the system of teaching, which I thought was stratified in a way which made it almost impossible to get a complete concept of a building. We would go to the engineering department and design beams and columns and talk in terms of millions of pounds which would be placed on these beams, but we never had it related to a design, so we never really got the feeling of how the architectural and engineering aspects were correlated. We students were asking that the courses be arranged so that the engineering studies pertaining to structure would be integrated with the architectural studies in design.

I went to Warren Perry, who was then the dean--following John Galen Howard, who died in 1931. Warren said, "This is the kind of thing that has to be dealt with by the faculty committees," and so on, and, "We all work under the provost, who is the person who generally directs the academic curriculum of the University." So he suggested I go talk to [Monroe] Deutsch, the provost. Deutsch said this kind of thing has to come from the faculty. So, there I was, right in the middle.

Riess: Was anyone acknowledging the problem?

Robert R.: Yes, they said, "Well, it's a good idea, you know, it's very interesting that you take such an interest in the subject. Fine." [Laughter.] "We wish there were more young people taking an interest like this. However, there's just nothing we can do about it."

Robert R.: At that time Walter Steilberg was designing a little library building just outside the old building, the old Ark, designed by Howard. Being an architect and an engineer and having worked with Julia Morgan, and being a person I knew,*I called him up and said I had a problem I wanted to talk about. I went to his house to discuss the idea. He agreed that this is the way it should be. He had the same criticisms of the way things were being taught, and felt that it was very timely to bring it up. He agreed to help, which he did. About a year after we graduated they did start to implement this program, probably due more to his efforts than to our student efforts.

I sent out about twenty letters, to every university that I thought had good architectural departments and to Paul Cret at Philadelphia, the dean at MIT, Gropius at Harvard, Eero Saarinen, and I asked them whether they thought the idea had merit. I got letters back from every one saying, "This is right. This is what it's all about. The roots of architecture are engineering and sculpture. This is what you should be thinking about."

Riess: Were their university departments any better put together at that point?

Robert R.: These were world-renowned figures in the field. These were the men who were the leaders in design. They were pulling the world toward a new freedom for design in architecture.

Riess: Are you saying that architecture and engineering slipped apart or had they never been together? Why now?

Robert R.: I think in the Renaissance period people were much more concerned about following some predetermined concept of detail. In the Renaissance Revival period the engineering aspects took a second place to the eclectic aspects of the work. In most of the great periods the structural aspects had a very strong influence on the concept. But when those periods were revived, the thing that was reborn was not the structural system, it was the aesthetic effect, and almost anything would be compromised to achieve the effect.

What was happening here was that a new period was coming. We called it "modern architecture." "Let's be honest. Let's do it so that what we say is what we really mean, and not copy some worn out tradition."

*The Ratcliff and Steilberg families are, in fact, connected: Robert Ratcliff's aunt Florence (Williams) was married to Walter Steilberg's first cousin. Henry F. Swift. - H.L.

Riess: There were always requirements for architects in other departments?

Robert R.: Oh, yes, the theory is that you take philosophy from a philosopher, and engineering from an engineer, political science from a politician, design or sculpture from the pros, and you go and collect information from these various sources. Then you try to put it together. And this is okay, except when you are dealing with something so fundamental, where you're saying that the structure should be expressed.

We reached a point where we were saying that the greatest architecture was the bridges of Maillard. And he was an engineer; he was not an architect. He did some fantastic bridges which simply expressed the lines of force, in a very handsome way. Maillard, I would say, had a strong influence on, for instance, Candela, in Mexico, who was another guy whose form had a sensitive relationship to the engineering requirements. He did a lot of churches and came up with some very strong designs.

That sort of thing is just like a hypodermic injection into a family of people, students, who are watching these things go on. It loosens your whole thinking about what is possible and what is beautiful, and what it is really all about.

Well, this is much further along the line than I was when this all took place back in 1934. I wasn't developed to the point where I could even talk like this. But I was very much aware, and so, I think, was everyone in the class, of the significance that this combination of engineering and design would have. Frankly, I don't think it's been well enough integrated yet.

Evelyn R.: What Bob and all of us were concerned about then was that our designing somehow didn't take the engineering principles enough into consideration. It was as if you would do the design and then make the engineering fit it, rather than having the know-how to work the two together, because great architecture always expresses the engineering behind it. The Pantheon in Rome is an example.

Robert R.: Yes, it's a basic element and it ought to be in at the beginning. There was a period about ten years ago when there was a lot of emphasis on space frames; that was the big thing in teaching. What you do is give a guy a whole bunch of little sticks and tell him to make something out of these little sticks, where every element is cantelevered off every other element. They set up strange requirements in the assignments, but they came out

Robert R.: with some very fantastic things.

Buckminster Fuller was one of the guys who really started this, with his theory of continuous tension, and noncontinuous compression; that tension systems are efficient systems, compression systems are inefficient. In an efficient system the emphasis is on quality materials and weight. A suspension bridge, for instance, has a very small amount of high quality material.

Riess: You were saying that Walter Steilberg was at the center of making the architecture and engineering more nearly integrated.

Robert R.: Yes. I think it was the first time it had been approached this way in Berkeley.

When we graduated, when we were seniors, we had three design projects during the semester, and one of the design projects when I was a senior was to design a palace in the manner of Peruzzi. Well, this was sort of par for the course. They were really teaching us the background of architecture; when you graduated from this place you really were going to know what happened in the past, and on the basis of this you're going to be able to put your brick on the pile.

Riess: I wonder why Walter Steilberg was never more officially connected with the University.*

Evelyn R.: I think one reason was that he had very strong convictions. He didn't follow the crowd at all. He was a very independent person and he was a very kind person, but he said what he thought, no matter whose toes he stepped on. Bob and I have talked about this quite a bit; he didn't do anything to further his own career, really, as such.

I don't mean that he was a sort of brash person like Frank Lloyd Wright, who made a point of--I mean, he was just the opposite of Frank Lloyd Wright; he had no affectations at all. He didn't pose at all; that was the furthest thing from his nature. But on the other hand he said what he thought when he was asked, and maybe it wasn't always the politic thing to do, you know. And I think that this probably is the reason that as an architect he wasn't very successful in the sense of having a lot of work of his own, his own commissions.*

Robert R.: I think he concerned himself with very important issues, and they were important to him, and by and large they were good

*The reader is referred to Helena Lawton's views on these questions in her chapter on W.T.S. - S.R.

Robert R.: issues too. He didn't fuss around with trivia.

Evelyn R.: He was always interested in things that were worth being interested in. He was always interested in earthquakes and in landslides in Berkeley. Any time there was a landslide he'd run around and photograph it. He really knew a great deal about that; he knew what was going to slide and what wasn't.

Robert R.: And there have really been some good landslides in Berkeley! He would go over and get all of the weather reports, the amount of rain that had fallen; he would analyze the thing, to see what had happened, photograph it, make notes on the soil conditions. He got to be one of the people who, though not specializing in the field, knew an awful lot about earthquakes.

As an example, he was architect for the maintenance of the stadium. There is a crack in the stadium tunnel, which was caused by the Hayward fault which runs right through the stadium. They placed a stress gauge down there in the tunnel and Walter kept track of that stress gauge for twenty years.

Evelyn R.: The last conversation I ever had with him...he called me up one day about a week before he was hit and he said he just wanted to emphasize the serious situation: our house sits on a very active spring of water, and he said, "Now, I know you and Robert have always handled that right and kept it open--." We are right on top of what was the water works that supplied the water for the people around. But this is the sort of thing he was very interested in.

Robert R.: There is this point of not dealing with trivia. And the other point is--and I don't think we were exceptional friends of his, I think he must have done this with lots of other people--but tell her about when we were first married, Evelyn.

Evelyn R.: Well, you see, I've known him since I was three years old. I used to play with his daughter down at his house, and my father, who was a sculptor, was a friend of his.*

When we were married we lived in an apartment down at 22 Panoramic. And after our first baby was born he called one day and he said he would like to come up and photograph us. He came and he spent a lot of time and took a lot of photographs of us and the baby, that we still have, much the best pictures of that part of our lives...and this was just out of the clear blue sky that he thought of doing something like that.

*Robert Paine, sculptor of the paleolithic animal figures at the site of the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles, and of the mountain lion figures at the entrance to "The Cats" in Los Gatos. - H.L.

Evelyn R.: As a child, all my memories of him are pleasant. And then, interestingly enough, our oldest son, Kit, the one who is now an architect, was a great friend of his daughter's children, Walter's grandchildren, who used to live on the hill too, the Lawton boys. They used to play in the same house where I played as a child, with Mr. Steilberg there, and Kit had the same feeling about him that I had as a child. He [Walter] would give the feeling, to a child, that he was really interested in you. He would always speak to you, ask you questions, and he had a very nice, very kind way.

Robert R.: It's interesting to think of what makes people really fond of other people, and I think I'm pretty much affected by a person who has this independent spirit and who does things not really for his own personal gain, who really has an interest in knowing something, and who, because he's found an answer, is anxious to share it with others, regardless of how it happens to affect him.

Evelyn R.: Did he ever talk to you about his interest in that Underdown precast concrete? He used that system to build the little house on his property. This was something that he picked up as an interesting development and, of course, it was one of the precursors of present day precast concrete.

Robert R.: The system was called the Underdown System. The element was a concrete block that was about two feet wide and about sixteen inches high. It was only made for a few years because the unions objected to the weight of the block.

I think Frank Lloyd Wright was one of the first ones who worked with concrete block, down in Los Angeles. I think he actually made them on the job on some of the houses he did in Los Angeles. But Steilberg, anyway, was interested in new techniques, new ideas.

Riess: It was hard to get people to listen?

Evelyn R.: Oh, I think a great many people listened. I don't think he ever had a great popular following, but people who were really exposed to him, many people, really appreciated him.

Robert R.: I think on the other side, though, the kind of thing that made some of the conservative party-liners in the town wonder about Steilberg, for example, was his position against automobiles. He was very clear he thought it was unconstitutional to make the minimum standard for a resident in a city that he be required to furnish a space for an automobile. This didn't seem to him

Robert R.: to be a reasonable minimum standard.

He was so much opposed to the idea that he never learned to drive.* He would get emotional about it and at times would seem quite irrational. I think he might have expressed this same emotional feeling in other areas, disregarding the political effect, which might partially explain why he didn't get more architectural commissions.**

He had an interest in the perforated oriental tiles, the square tiles that have the corners knocked out of them. You see them on some of his work; you also see a lot of them on Julia Morgan's work. Those Chinese tiles are a hallmark of those two people.

Riess: Did he talk about Julia Morgan?

Robert R.: I had a few conversations with him about Julia. He admired her very much. I was always curious about how Julia behaved on the job because most women, you know, aren't really cast in that role. He said that Julia was pretty clear about how she did things. He said she wore a pair of pants under her long skirts, regular pants like my pants, so she didn't feel the least bit exposed. When she got up on the scaffold there was nothing to be seen. And she marched around and took hold and she was very forthright.

Another place it is interesting to get background on Walter is to go down to San Simeon. He's one of the authorities quoted on the tour. When one of the guides found out that we knew Walter Steilberg, lived near him, he told us he thought Walter knew more about San Simeon than any living person.

Evelyn R.: You remember those tall palms down at San Simeon? Those came from over where the Pacific School of Religion is now. They had been planted by Hearst's mother. She lived where Ridge House, the co-op house, is now, and she had had those trees planted.

Bob's father did the Pacific School of Religion, and the story was that the school was going to have to pay \$50 to have some of these palms taken out because some were right in the way of construction, and Bob's father had the idea of writing to Hearst to see if he would like them for San Simeon, which he was then building, and Hearst said he certainly would, and the palms were dug up, taken by barge down to San Simeon, and Hearst paid to take them away. That seemed like a great coup.

Riess: Did your father go to school here, Mr. Ratcliff?

*He did know how to drive, but elected not to. - H.L.

**See footnote, p. 151.

Robert R.: Yes, he was in the class of 1903. Then he went right into John Galen Howard's office after college. He didn't study architecture in college; he studied chemistry. But he started building houses, designing and selling speculative houses while he was in college, and he earned enough money so that he went to Europe and spent a year in Italy and France, studying the architecture there. Then he came back and learned architecture in Howard's office.

One of his early jobs was doing some of the supervision on the Mining Building. Oh, and that is a good building, one of the greatest buildings on campus.

Riess: There have been changes in that, haven't there?

Robert R.: When you entered there was the vaulted ceiling in the entrance, and those stairways, all Romanesque architecture. Then you went into the great open court that went all the way down. The mining cars at the bottom came out from the hill and dumped their load in the middle, and then there were big, wide corridors all around the court and that huge skylight over the top.

The concept is just fantastic. This great, huge, rectangular space in the middle, four stories high. The other building on the campus that was a great building was Bacon Hall, the old library. It was a round building, two stories high, smaller.

Riess: Your father and Julia Morgan were in Howard's office at the same time?

Robert R.: I think not. She was older than my father.

My father said that Maybeck and Julia Morgan were at the Beaux Arts at the same time, and there was some competition which Julia won, and he seems to remember hearing that when Julia won this competition that Maybeck went up and hugged her and said, "Julia, I could kiss you!" which he always thought was very amusing.

Towards the end, Julia Morgan tapered off rather badly. As a matter of fact, she burned a lot of her records because she had the concept, Walter said, that she had made these documents for other people, and that as a custodian for the people for whom she had made them she had a responsibility to not allow them to be circulated to someone else.

Riess: Documents being blueprints, plans, etc.?

Robert R.: Tracings. And finally some of them were saved, but the majority of her material was destroyed. It's sort of sad.

Julia Morgan was described by Walter also as a person who took the requests of a client to heart. If a person came to her and said, "I want you to design me a Spanish pagoda in the manner of somebody-or-other," she would go out and research and do it as well as she possibly could, whereas a great many architects tend to believe their clients need some education, that the architect serves his client best by trying to capture the spirit of this thing in a new sort of creative way. That's the tendency of most people who have got this urge to design. Julia simply didn't have that--to the same extent. I think she was a fantastically good designer, but she was also a very, very clear kind of servant of the client.

*See footnote, p. 151.

REMEMBERING WALTER STEILBERG

An Interview with Norman L. Jensen, John E. Wagstaff, George C. Hodges, and Edward B. Hussey, 20 March 1975

I CAMPUS WORK, CONCRETE RESEARCH

- Jensen: [Speaking of Walter Steilberg's work on the Berkeley campus] some buildings, like Hilgard, had the sgraffito falling apart, and Walter managed to find some old-time specialist to restore that. There's been, you might say, restoration--waterproofing, fixing cracks, and restoring buildings--and Hilgard was most notable. He helped us in some litigation on the new Warren Public Health building. It had some falling plaster and so on.
- Riess: Did you say he helped you in litigation?
- Jensen: This is some research that was involved there--why the plaster was coming loose and falling off.
- Riess: How would he be called in?
- Jensen: We called him in as a consultant. We'd get a proposal from him--so much an hour, and what his guess would be as to how many hours it would be. In those days, it quite often would be [paid on] a purchase order, as we called it. It was basically just on an hourly basis that we hired him in most of those cases, because the work he usually did wasn't in a normal fee situation. It had some indeterminate quality to it. It was sort of investigative; we called him our "architectural research department," you might say.
- Riess: So he enjoyed the kind of problem you were bringing him?
- Jensen: That's right. He loved to review and be sort of a building detective of why things were happening.
- He did the structural work on Hertz Hall and the U.C. music building. [Morrison]
- Riess: Did he occupy a special niche, as a structural engineer (as he called himself)?

Jensen: Well, yes. I always turned to him when we had some little problem on one of the older buildings--you know, if it was leaking, or the plaster was falling off, or it was cracking, or something else--because this was the kind of thing he liked to do. In some cases, like the Sather Tower Campanile, he pointed out these things to us--that something was happening. The stadium was another one, and the Greek Theatre was another one, where it was his concern about these things that [encouraged us] to find some funds to go find and investigate and later correct these things.

Riess: So he would come down to the campus and look things over?

Jensen: Yes, he did, because he lived just nearby. And he'd talk with us occasionally. There were times when I had a heck of a time getting him to accept a commission and paying him, because he'd say, "I like to do this, and it's good information--good research--I'm doing, and I feel that I owe the University something." Mr. Weaver, who used to be in the office just next door here for many years as University Engineer, and I would talk to him about it, "No, this is something you're doing of value to the University, and you should be paid for it." So you'd almost have to twist his arm to accept payment; he was just concerned that something be done.*

Riess: When you said that he responded that he was just doing research that interested him, would he go home and write up reports and carry it through?

Jensen: Yes, all in longhand too. [Laughs.] We have many, many reports that he meticulously wrote out--things he was concerned about and so on. He did follow up on things later on--the Campanile--and every so often I'd hear from him, or he'd write a little letter longhand.

Riess: In one of the interviews that he gave he said that he thought that reinforced concrete was still far from being understood as a medium, and that was in 1968.

Jensen: As we know, from very many experiences--and he participated in them at the campus here--concrete is a man-made material, with all the faults that man has in not being able to control everything he does. The qualities of concrete vary widely, depending on just how it was treated in the first place. It's those mistreatments of the concrete that have such great consequences.

I recall a very dramatic example of this that he investigated and worked on was the Alumni House. The retaining walls (which are the basement walls in the Alumni House--the east end) in about a

* This was during the last years of his life, when personal circumstances necessitated a drastic change in his work patterns. - H.L.

Jensen: ten-foot frequency had vertical cracks about an eighth of an inch wide, though we had no leaks. (Incidentally, that shows the worth of a real good membrane.) He did research and tracked back. And I, along with George Troxell and some others that were involved, had to find out what the characteristics were when they designed the mix. It was too rich a mix; this pour was done on a very hot day; and there was insufficient control, perhaps, of the curing, etc.; the cement they used was a so-called "hot" cement.

These are the sorts of things Walter used to check with the various cement companies. He had the opinion that they ground the cement too fine, and this is what made it hotter. You may well have heard him expound on that. He was quite concerned with this man-made material, the basic ingredient being the cement that is manufactured. The rest of it is putting it together with all the needed controls that were seldom ideally followed.

I knew he was interested in these things, and that's why he was the first one we'd turn to, to see if he was interested in pursuing some of these things. He wasn't the sole person, many times, as I mentioned. In the Alumni House we had some of our own engineering staff here that were very interested in it. In fact, Professor Davis, that Davis Hall is named for, was also involved in that one. It was such a dramatic demonstration of the shrinkage of concrete, of which we've had so many bad examples. The other one he was quite interested in--although not as much as George Troxell--was the plastic flow of concrete that has caused so much trouble because of the distortions that it causes.

Hussey: I remember him talking to me one time. There were so many dozens of variables in concrete: there's a variable in your cement, in your sand and the size of your gravel, in the mixing time and the placing. There are so many variables to be considered in concrete structure, and it's hard to determine sometimes the exact reason for some particular strength or so on; you have to work all these things together.

Riess: Do you think he was working on finding a perfect solution?

Hussey: Yes, always trying to get the best combination of all those variables.

Riess: So he thought it was possible?

Hodges: He knew it was impossible.

Hussey: What frustrated him, as well as many other people around, was that in just the period from World War II on through, it seemed like

Jensen: concrete was shrinking more for some while. There were a great number of publicized concerns about that. In fact, the state even sued somebody down in San Jose because of that, and he was interested in that too. Then they came up with this special sand and special granite or some doggone aggregate, and this was very much more expensive. For a while every architectural firm and every structural engineer was claiming that they couldn't guarantee that the building wouldn't shrink less unless they used these special things. But evidently it's gone out of vogue again now.

Walter was quite interested in why the shrinkage factor seemed to be increasing. As I recall, he felt that the cement--the manufactured part of this thing--was the part that had the greatest possibility of being the culprit. His feeling was that that was it, and that they were rushing the setting time of the cement mixture. Trying to do things faster was what was causing most of the trouble.

Hodges: Have you ever read one of his specs for concrete?

Riess: No.

Hodges: He was a very practical man, right down to rubber tire buggies for the placing of the concrete on membrane, and all workers wearing rubber-soled shoes.

Jensen: That's right, because he did so much work afterwards, trying to correct these things--leaks and other things like that. He therefore was trying to prepare people to do the things that would prevent those later happening. The worst thing, as you mentioned, is the membrane deck being penetrated during the later stages, and therefore not being what it's meant for--a waterproof layer.

Hodges: You can't stop shrinkage, so you have to provide for it; there's no way of stopping it; you can reduce it. It varies with the amount of fines, with the water, with the size of the aggregate. For a time--maybe you've picked up on this--he was much interested in the use of concrete masonry block.

Riess: Is that the Underdown?

Hodges: The Underdown unit.

Jensen: He designed the architectural library that's now called Northgate Hall [1934], using Underdown. This is a little concrete block building. Howard Moise did the part between that and the original--he connected it up with that other wing so that it appears as if it

- Jensen: were part of the original building. We just recently had our seismic consultants review the buildings, and they reviewed that one and found it to be very good. So he had seismic concerns; at any rate, it was substantially built.
- Riess: That was a case where he practically volunteered his services, didn't he?
- Jensen: No, that building was done before...I don't know the background of how he got that job; it was done before I was around the office.
- Hodges: He was a consultant for Basalt. Did you talk to anybody at the Basalt? Who was the man that ran that?
- Hussey: He had a lot of stuff on Basalt and Pacific Coast Aggregate. I have that at home now.
- Riess: I didn't talk with any of the people he worked with there.
- Hodges: He was a very good friend of the man who ran that during the war. I can't remember his name. I think he passed away, though, shortly after the war. But he did all of their consulting work for the Underdown unit. In fact, he helped them develop that.
- Jensen: Another thing that's not mentioned here [looking at incomplete list of Steilberg work on campus] when Jack mentioned how he was willing to climb around on things: we had the problem of the culvert under the stadium. That, at the time, was the only way that Strawberry Creek had to come through. We were concerned about a weak link there--it wasn't too large. He crawled from one end to the other of that thing, and we did some emergency work, putting some mining jacks in there at the far end where there was evidently greater pressure on it. He is the one (well, we both worked on it) that came up with a gunite system of reinforcing that. But the main thing was that we wanted to have what we now call "big inch" that skirts around the stadium; it goes around the north side there and comes out just below the Faculty Club on the creek again. It's the one the kids run up into.
- Riess: It's called the "big inch?"
- Jensen: Well, we call it that. It's the bypass culvert. Actually the flow of the creek normally goes through the culvert that goes under the stadium. Of course, that culvert also picks up a lot of drainage from a lot of things, so we need that; and then that's the flow of the creek, obviously, above where the bypass dumps below the Alumni House. When the flow gets up to a certain amount that the original

Jensen: culvert won't take, then it overflows into the bypass culvert. Unfortunately, though we had it, we had that flood that came through International House one time mainly because the big trash chute there got blocked up and water couldn't get into the proper places.

There was another thing that Walter had some very definite ideas about--"grizzlies," as they are called: things to prevent bits of trees getting in and blocking the culvert. But he was really getting concerned that they didn't get out there the minute it started raining and check to see that nothing was blocking it. Because if they didn't check soon enough, the blockage was there and you couldn't get at it the minute this rushing roar came, as it did in the October flood of '62. It really made a mess.

II FRIENDS AND ADMIRATIONS

Riess: Changing the subject, in what way did you know Walter Steilberg, Mr. Wagstaff?

Wagstaff: I knew him first of all casually, when I was a student here. As Norm said, he lived up near the stadium. One of our classmates, Evelyn Paine Ratcliff, lived up above him there, and we used to go up by his house. Then later, when I was at the San Francisco campus, we had to call Walter in as a trouble shooter there too. He was sort of a trouble shooter on other architects, you might say.

He was a scholar and student of materials and methods, and he went at these matters with a certain amount of...humor isn't quite the right word, but he found them interesting and challenging, and kind of adventurous. He did a job for us in this area over in San Francisco about fifteen years ago, and I guess he was then about seventy, where you had to crawl under the building to find out what was going on with some footing problems we were having. He was willing to do anything like that.

Then at Santa Cruz he designed our large entrance sign to the campus. He did that as a gift to the University.

Riess: How did that come to pass?

Wagstaff: Chancellor McHenry and I were over at Asilomar at a conference. Julia Morgan did a lot of the buildings there, and Steilberg had worked on them for Julia. There was some interesting lettering on some of the buildings at Asilomar, and I found out that Walter had done those. I suggested to Chancellor McHenry that he might like to do something of this sort for us at Santa Cruz, and he did. He did this sign, which is a huge redwood "stick," about, oh, fifteen feet long, four feet high, and a couple of feet thick. He went up and supervised the loggers in finding the tree, cutting it, and the shaping of the stick; he got into all those things. We have that sign here that he designed.

Wagstaff: Then he gave the University at Santa Cruz some books from his library. I don't know how many, but quite a number.

Riess: Architectural books?

Wagstaff: I think so, yes, from his architectural library. He told me he gave them to Santa Cruz rather than Berkeley, where he would rather have given them, because the Berkeley stacks were too closed and he wanted his books to be used. Later, shortly before he died, he talked about the books again. He noticed that, for one thing, the University at Santa Cruz didn't develop an engineering school and some other schools that were supposed to be developed as soon as we had thought. He came to me one day and said he thought some of his books that were in the Santa Cruz collection would be better suited to student needs at Berkeley, and wouldn't I think about that. I talked to our librarian, and the librarian thought that, to the contrary, all these books were most useful to some institutes at Santa Cruz and he'd like to keep them in the library at Santa Cruz.

I passed all this correspondence back to Walter, and that didn't particularly satisfy him at all. He said that this was just like a librarian: He wanted every book he could get his hands on. So that's where that was left; we still have those books.

Riess: Somebody--I don't know whether it was Walter or not--said Julia Morgan didn't want to give her library to the Berkeley campus because she thought that people in Berkeley just read magazines anyway--at least the architecture students did.

Hussey: What happened to her library?

Riess: I'm really not sure.

Hussey: She had some books that were so big that when she had a client come in, she asked me to go into the library to lift the books off the shelf for this client.

Hodges: She was so tiny.

[Speaker?]: Beaux Arts type books, I guess.

Hussey: Lots of English and Spanish books.

Riess: So you always kept in touch with Mr. Steilberg?

Wagstaff: Yes, I was in touch with what he did, more or less as a friend and

Wagstaff: admirer. I'd see him off and on when I was over in Berkeley on the Berkeley campus. But as I told you over the phone, my contacts with him were sort of peripheral, and in recent years.

You knew he had a place at Carmel?

Riess: I've heard that he did.

Wagstaff: He used to go down there on weekends.

Riess: Did he build it?

Wagstaff: No, I think it was a place that he bought.

I became aware of his Carmel place when he (Mr. Steilberg) came to Santa Cruz to check on the entrance sign he designed for the campus. Santa Cruz became a sort of mid-point stop between Berkeley and Carmel. Usually Mrs. Steilberg was with him on those visits and she did all the driving.

Riess: I gather Steilberg was not fond of Frank Lloyd Wright. Why?

Wagstaff: My guess is that he would have some aversion to Frank Lloyd Wright's personality or style or something. You know, he might be a little uptight about Frank Lloyd Wright's flamboyance.

Jensen: Also Frank Lloyd Wright's inconsistency. He'd propound a system and rationale for a particular design mode, and then ten years later he was doing just the opposite, but he had a rationale to explain why that was the best thing in the world.

Wagstaff: He was just the opposite kind of person from Frank Lloyd Wright. Frank Lloyd Wright was pushing Frank Lloyd Wright all the time, and Steilberg wasn't pushing Steilberg at all. I remember seeing an interview--we're getting on Frank Lloyd Wright now--of a guy interviewing Frank Lloyd Wright going into his hotel room to make the interview and finding that he had all the newspapers out there with all the notices of his visit to the town there laid on the bed in a circle.

In one of my recent visits with Walter, he spoke of hospitals and rest homes; his wife was in a rest home and he was very appalled at the conditions of the rest homes and the whole technique and the system in our culture where older people are sort of shoved off. He had terrible guilt feelings about his wife being there. (Did you know this, Norm?) He was doing everything possible to get her back to the house, including tearing down the fence and putting in a ramp.

Jensen: I had a number of conversations with him about that.

Wagstaff: He mentioned that when he had been in a hospital, the best care he had ever gotten was at some Catholic hospital in Oakland. He said, "That's a heck of a thing for a heathen to say!"*

Jensen: That was Providence Hospital.

Wagstaff: And he liked the care he got from the Sisters there, he said. I thought of that when he was at Herrick, when he was hurt.

Hussey: Speaking of Frank Lloyd Wright, you might be interested to know that he was speaking here one time and Warren Cheney took him up to meet Mr. Maybeck, Mr. Maybeck was outside doing some brickwork on his walk, I think. When he was introduced to Mr. Wright, he said, "How do you do, Mr. Wright? I always wanted to show you how to build a building." [Laughter.]

And talking about [Steilberg's] modesty: I read one of Walter's letters that I have there that was regarding the monastery in San Francisco. He wrote that he didn't want his name mentioned, or he didn't want any publicity about it; he didn't care for that sort of thing.

Wagstaff: A guy that might have known Walter--because in a way they were alike (and in many ways they were different), in that they're scholars and paid great attention to detail--is Ernest Born. There might have been an overlap of interest there.

Jensen: They worked together on the Greek Theatre. Ernest Born did all these Greek Theatre improvements. Walter did the remedial work--fixing up the concrete steps or seats there that were all falling apart.

Wagstaff: I know he was a great admirer of Ernest Born's perfection. No offense on Steilberg, who did the sign at Santa Cruz, but the lettering on that sign, though it's quite good, is not in my opinion as good quality as the lettering on the Greek Theatre. To the average layman it doesn't make that much difference, but Walter would recognize that.

Hussey: Ernest Born was very good. He was in the same class I was, and I think he was perhaps the best one in the class.

Jensen: Yes, that's true. Ernest Born, particularly on some of the things Ernest was interested in, what Walter had done at the Greek Theatre, worked with him to a degree there. He'd be a good source.

*Helena Lawton had differing views on many points in this group interview. She develops these in her contributed chapter on her father, Walter T. Steilberg.



Placement and unveiling of the redwood entry sign, University of California, Santa Cruz, January 1966. Lettering by Walter Steilberg. Far left is Dean McHenry, UCSC Chancellor, far right is Walter Steilberg. Vester Dick photograph.

Hussey: He, again, was one who was modest in some ways. For instance, they used to have an Ark "jinks" once a year, and Ernest would do some very fine decorations and all that. As soon as he got that done he would go home; he wouldn't be at the jinks.

Wagstaff: This is a very small item, but it kind of gives you an idea of Walter's character. He wanted to give the University at Santa Cruz (at first I thought he wanted to give it to me for use in the office, but it turned out that he wanted to give it to the University) an oak table. He was sort of breaking up his office and getting rid of his stuff. He wanted to give us an oak plan-filing drawer, quite a nice one. He first mentioned it to me about three or four years ago. Then I was sort of under the weather and kind of forgot about it, but when I saw him again after a couple or three years I thought that by this time he must have given it away, surely. The oak desk came up again, and he still had it and he still wanted us to have it in Santa Cruz.

But he wanted to give it to the University, in the memory of Stafford Jory, one of the profs at Berkeley. We discussed the wording. He wanted a little metal plate or something on it, and he was going to give me the exact words that were to be on it, which he never, never did. But he wanted to say, probably, "In memory of Stafford Jory, teacher of architecture." He said, "I don't want 'professor' on there, but I want 'teacher' on there." For what reason, I don't know. That still remains to be done, and the oak piece is in my office down there.

Riess: It does seem that some kind of distinction is possible between professing and teaching something.

Wagstaff: There was something very significant to that, as far as Walter was concerned.*

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

III DETECTING, DREAMING, DESIGNING

Wagstaff: And then about four or five months ago I was up in Berkeley and wanted to have him join me for lunch. We walked into the Golden Bear and Dick Rensal [?] came and joined us. While we were there we bumped into Vernon De Mars, who makes his daily pilgrimage to the building, you know, [laughter] so he joined us for lunch, and Vernon hadn't seen Steilberg for quite a long time. They got to talking about what Vernon had been asked to do on Wheeler--investigating Wheeler, or doing something about seismic--and Walter entered right into the conversation. He remembered all kinds of things; he had all kinds of things to say about how those urns were put on the building, and how they were braced and so on.

Jensen: Boy, what's what we're trying to find out.

Wagstaff: It interested De Mars no end. Then Walter walked home and Vernon and I walked down to University Hall. He was saying, "You know, I think I'd like to ask him if he wouldn't consult with me on that. He's got all kinds of information, hasn't he?" I never did hear whether he did or not.

Jensen: I don't know.

Wagstaff: I felt it would have been good for Walter's morale.

Jensen: Well, of course, as you know, he was actively getting ready to do a little research back in his own files for the new chimesmaster, Mr. Pilling, who wanted to add bells up in Sather Tower. Many years ago the former chimesmaster, John Noyes, had that same idea. Walter was interested in it, and we hired him to look into a means of hanging the bells, which was a ring of steel formed up there to hang the bells on.

Wagstaff: Outside?

Jensen: No, inside. There's already a ring, and this would be another ring for more bells. I couldn't find the design that he made, only a

Jensen: reference to it in a file of correspondence; so I arranged a luncheon with Walter at the Faculty Club, and had the chimes-master and Professor Milos Polivka (whom he had worked with many times in checking the verticality of the Campanile), and Frank Mc Clure (who is our seismic engineer who had just checked the Campanile seismically), and Walter Soroka (who is an acoustical consultant who checked the glass panels put up on the Campanile to keep people from dropping out of college)--because more bells might cause more vibrations and cause some trouble to the structure.

So we were all people gathered together who might be interested in the structural and other phenomena that more bells might cause, to see what information we had. Walter said he knew he had some computations and a drawing on that, and he was going to look it up and let me know. In the meantime, he wanted to look again at the structural part of the Campanile. He came down to the office and I arranged to bring down here our little reference reduced-scale books, and he selected several of the original structural drawings that he wanted--a part of John Galen Howard's set. It was when we had those prints made and were delivering them that we discovered that he had been injured and was in the hospital. He may have been on his way down to check on something here when he was hit.

But he was very interested in that, and we were about to see if he wanted to associate as an engineer to sort of revise the drawings; or maybe they wouldn't even have needed revision. Did we run across that in the material that we found?

Hussey: Not in the things that I had brought to you, but there was another box of items. When I was up at his house I was sorting everything out, and everything that had to do with the University I put in one box. I didn't actually go through it to see what there was, but if I saw that it had to do with the University I put it in that box. I think that must be over at Mr. Cardwell's office.

Jensen: Walter, when he was first concerned about the stadium falling apart, could look down and walk by it practically every day. He was the one who we got to make a survey and come up with a means of fixing it. It needs fixing all over again, unfortunately--the cracking of the concrete, and it's spalling and exposing the steel and rusting it. It's starting that cycle of deterioration that he saw and helped stop at that time.

- Jensen: Concrete back in those days was placed not as well in some cases as it is today, and some of the reinforcing bars are awfully close to the surface. This is the problem--areas that hadn't yet shown any deterioration have deteriorated since. It was no reflection on Walter that he didn't get all the things that later developed.
- Riess: Do you think he ever would have handled--was he ever **given**--a major design assignment like the stadium? I know that's John Galen Howard, but could Walter Steilberg have been interested at that point? Or did he like putting it back together better than conceiving it?*
- Hodges: He was a fine architect. Have you read the stadium report?
- Riess: No, I haven't. I don't know that it would make any sense to me.
- Hodges: Yes, it would, because it wasn't that sort of a report. It was about that [demonstrates] thick or thicker, and a lot of it was what to do with all that waste space, and how to use the playing field...
- Jensen: He was continuously concerned with trying to make better use of the stadium. He wanted to fill in, as some of it's filled in for the team quarters there, further spaces. He came up with a scheme one time for classrooms, and he came up with a scheme for dormitories and other things to fill in and use that space.
- Hodges: And a swimming pool.
- Jensen: Some of them we didn't react too well to. Though structurally you might say they were all right, they weren't where we would need such facilities. In fact, later we actually made a study of putting intercollegiate athletics in the area he had proposed for classrooms. The cost and other factors didn't turn out to be that economical to do. And, of course, we begin to get seismic and other problems now with structures like that.

He volunteered an awful lot of things like that for the campus. He was concerned with a path somewhere that he thought could be improved, or even a lightbulb that was out, or something like that occasionally. He enjoyed the campus, just as a park, I believe, and he felt very identified with the Berkeley campus. As I say, for this reason I kept running into his feeling that he didn't want to be paid for what he was helping us with because it was sort of a labor of love.

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

- Jensen: Most of the things he was concerned about were those he could see around on the campus--or suspect that something was happening from something that he could see. As I say, he was sort of a building detective--an architectural detective. So I only saw him in his later years, after World War II, where he was mostly interested in things nearby where he lived. We enjoyed that concern because we were here.
- Riess: From what I've read in his interviews, he didn't seem to have much use for styles.
- Jensen: Your mentioning that reminds me that the closest thing he could see over towards the stadium were the little ticket booths and so on there that were old wooden structures that were deteriorating. He suggested that we replace them, and he came up with this concrete block and other things that we were mentioning. He very definitely felt they should be very simple, direct solutions to what they were serving, functional, and a crisp expression of what they were trying to do. I agreed with him that they would look good. And they do; they're just simple little structures there. Some people may think they look too primitive--too basic--but I think more and more architecture is getting to key structural expressions. And he liked to express structure as the architectural part of a building.
- Hussey: I saw it mentioned someplace that, for instance, an engineer would design a truss on a building or a beam or something, so it would be strong enough to carry its load; and an architect might design something that was very fancy but not be so structural. Walter was right in between; he was both an architect and an engineer. It was mentioned particularly in the YWCA in Honolulu that I was on that he designed those beams so that they looked very well architecturally, but also they were very structurally designed too. He had that combination.
- Riess: He said once that when he gave himself that designation, "architectural engineer," that there was a lot of outrage on the part of the engineers; so he did settle for "structural engineer."
- Jensen: I remember that he told me that he went up to get his structural engineer's license one time; he decided that would be a good idea to answer that criticism. As we know, he was told that the architect's license covers everything that a structural engineer could do, and it wasn't necessary.

We did have problems when he was the (let's say) structural consultant (which is what we had to call him for Gardner Dailey's buildings) because our agreement called for a licensed structural

Jensen: engineer. So he had to be the exception when we had him as a structural engineer on various buildings.

IV YEARS AWAY: KODIAK, ROME

- Riess: What you are talking about sounds like very satisfying work for him. He's also quoted as saying that the most successful work he ever did was in teaching on Kodiak Island. Do you think that's a wry or a modest comment? Why do you think he said that?
- Hodges: He was the base engineer.
- Riess: He taught the Seabees apparently.
- Wagstaff: Well, he did. Maybe that's why he stresses the "teacher" as opposed to the "professor." And maybe he identified himself in that way. I can imagine that he would take great pleasure out of it. He was always telling you about all kinds of things about everything, you know. If you listened attentively you were really his good friend. I suspect that maybe when he was up in that place he was talking to young people who hadn't had a formal education, and giving them all kinds of helpful information gave him a great deal of satisfaction.
- Hodges: They were pretty competent men. He was in charge of all the civilian construction, of the engineering. His teaching was just a side activity.
- Jensen: He loved the one to one relationship, the famous "sitting on the other end of a log."
- Wagstaff: Yes, he was a teacher in the best sense of the word.
- Jensen: Yes, he was a great teacher. He wanted the response, you know. A professor stands up and propounds all this knowledge and very seldom gets very much response. Walter was much more personal; he wanted to talk on a one to one relationship so you were getting an immediate response--you could either sense it or listen to it, and that's what he loved to do

Hodges: It [Kodiak] was a perfect situation; there was only work in Kodiak; there was nothing else--no entertainment--at least not when I was there. I imagine it changed. We were there in late '42, I guess, and he must have been there just briefly before we arrived.

Riess: What I gather is that if it weren't for the family responsibilities he would have stayed there.

Hodges: He loved it there, and it is beautiful.

Riess: That's interesting, what you said about its being just work. What does that do for somebody?

Hodges: You work all day and you go home and think about it all night. You can concentrate so beautifully, with no distractions at all. You're handed your meals on a big steel tray three times a day.

Wagstaff: That wouldn't bother Steilberg; that would be the kind of thing he'd like. He'd really enjoy that; he was a reflective sort of a guy.

Hodges: It's perfect for work. You can get ten times as much done as you can anyplace else.

Wagstaff: Did you talk to any of the people who were with him in Rome?

Riess: No, except for Mr. Hussey.

Wagstaff: Chuck Carrs [?] was there. Apparently they lived [in Rome] in one of the Italian neighborhoods. I remember hearing Chuck talking about he and Walter commuting to their office on the bus, and Walter being friendly with the Italian busdrivers. I guess he had a little smattering of Italian...This, again, was long after Miss Morgan's time, if that's what you're looking for.

Riess: No, that's okay; I'm looking for Walter Steilberg.

Didn't he have hobbies or distractions? In a place like Kodiak would he have been "all work and meals?"

Hussey: He did a great deal of photography. I found among his things a big sheet like this [demonstrates] with the names of all the people in Kodiak and how many copies of his pictures they had ordered. So he did a lot of photography.*

Hodges: And teaching, and the cat and the dog--Timmy and Chum. He brought them both back here when he came back. Chum was a huge black

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Hodges: labrador that had been a little tiny black puppy in Kodiak. As old as he got, you could put your hand out like this [demonstrates] and Chum would try to sit in it; and he was huge. I think Dorothy Cox mentions that [attached].

Mrs. Steilberg was living in Kodiak towards the latter part of the war. When we first went out, the Japanese had just bombed Dutch Harbor and had come clear in; so there weren't very many civilians there, and I think most of them were phased out by the end of the war. We were the first group of Seabees to start out the Aleutians.

[Re the poem.] I don't know if that's Mr. Steilberg or not; it could be. [See appendices.]

Wagstaff: I think he could have done that.

Hussey: George, were you a Seabee or were you a civilian?

Hodges: I was a Seabee.

Hussey: Walter was not, was he?

Hodges: He was the engineer of the base. He was civilian, but I don't know whether he was with Mary Chapman Scott or whether he was with the navy.

Riess: Mary Chapman Scott?*

Hodges: That's the contracting outfit that built the base, but I don't know whether they continued to be the contractor for the base, because more and more Seabees went out as the war progressed and they did a lot of navy things.

Wagstaff: Is that where you met Walter?

Hodges: Yes.

Wagstaff: You know, Walter did not drive.

Hodges: No, never.

Hussey: Just once, I believe, and he said he drove into the ocean.

*Interviewer later asks Mr. Hodges about the Sims Drake Construction Company and Mr. Hodges answers that both companies were in Kodiak. - S.R.

- Wagstaff: As a matter of fact, I think his not driving and not knowing how people react and how drivers behave might have been his undoing in this accident.
- Hodges: He couldn't see to draw.*
- Riess: You mean towards the end?
- Hodges: Never, as long as I knew him; he couldn't see.
- Riess: You mean his focus wasn't good?
- Hodges: I don't know what it was, but if he erased part of a line he didn't replace it in the same place. Have you seen his lettering and drafting? And his writing is almost illegible.
- Jensen: It's very tiny.
- Hussey: Yes, I have some longhand letters of his from when he was in Spain and a lot of them are illegible. He said when he was over there that you didn't trust a stenographer or anybody else because of the political situation; so he'd write in longhand and send them over to Miss Morgan, and she'd have somebody type them up.
- Wagstaff: I don't know how to put this, but I think Walter got into a lot of these kinds of assignments because he didn't have in his personality the kind of qualities that an architect who's bucking the establishment and the system--clients and banks and those kinds of things--could deal with. He just wasn't particularly interested; he would be interested in getting right at the crux of the thing. That's probably one of the reasons he never had a...
- Hodges: He had two separate careers, really, didn't he? He was very successful as an architect, actually.
- Wagstaff: With his own practice?
- Hodges: Yes.
- Riess: Mr. Wagstaff, I was interested in what you said about Walter having chosen to do things the way he did.
- Wagstaff: It seemed to me that in the later years he was more rewarded by...
- Hodges: He did what he wanted to do.
- Jensen: Yes, what he was interested in was what he liked to do.

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Riess: So there's no reason to think of him as an architect who didn't practice?

Wagstaff: No, or who didn't have the ability equal to or better than most. He surely didn't like any pretense or hypocrisy.

Riess: That seems to be why he liked Julia Morgan so much--there was no pretense there. Is there anybody else who even began to come up to her in his estimation?

Hodges: He never worked with anyone else that much.

Hussey: No, I think not. I do remember, however, in 1923 I had just finished my master's degree at U.C. and I was working for him up at his house. He said, "The best training you can get is to work for Mr. Maybeck."

Wagstaff: He knew my father. My father was an architect who worked for other architects in San Francisco. I didn't know that he knew him, and I don't know what the nature of their acquaintanceship was, but he had occasion to refer to my father several times recently.

Jensen: I think Walter had great respect for Gardner Dailey. He did the parking structure up here and the music building and so on.

Hussey: He worked with him on several projects.*

Riess: Would he only work with somebody whom he admired?

Wagstaff: Yes.

[Mr. Wagstaff departs.]

Riess: If Steilberg was so much a teacher, as we were saying, who does he leave behind? What is his legacy?

Hussey: There are several people he's influenced; my whole life has more or less stemmed from my contact with him. It's because of him that I went to Honolulu; it's because of Honolulu that I went to Japan; it was because I went to Japan that I got married; and he also sent me to Arabia; and he sent me to Ashley and Evers where I worked for three years. A great deal is due to Walter Steilberg; I'd say my whole professional life has had some relationship to having known him.

Riess: His contacts with the University have been mostly with keeping it

*He worked extensively with Dailey on the immensely touchy structural problems of the Surfrider, Princess Kaiulani, and Moana hotels in Honolulu, and on the equally touchy problems of Hertz Hall and Morrison Music Building, UC Berkeley. - H.L.

- Riess: hanging together, it sounds like, Mr. Jensen. But it's interesting that he didn't do more teaching or anything here. I've asked people about that, and I wonder if you have some response to that?
- Jensen: I wouldn't know, because we don't have anything to do with the teaching part of the University here. He was very much interested in how buildings went through the years and went through the weather and this sort of thing. As I say, he's the one that would be browsing around the campus and discover something that was going awry and suggest that we get concerned about it.
- Riess: Mr. Hodges, I want to get more into the World War II time in his life.
- Hodges: I didn't know him before Kodiak.
- Riess: Was he in Seattle right before Kodiak?
- Hussey: I know among his things he had some Seattle newspapers, but maybe he might have gotten those in Kodiak. But they were from the time the war finished. I gave these papers to Helena. They were about the war ending and they were Seattle papers.
- Hodges: Wasn't Mrs. Steilberg in Seattle for a while while he was in Kodiak, and then she came on to Kodiak? I think she was working in a hospital in Seattle with veterans.
- Riess: Do you know anything about why he couldn't stay longer than the two years in Kodiak?*
- Hodges: He stayed until the end of the war--until after the end of the war, because he came back after I did.
- Riess: So he came to the end of the assignment?
- Hodges: I expect so, but I don't know that he didn't leave of his own volition. I think he may have. I don't know how much more they went on building there when the war ended. In most places it just stopped.
- Riess: Then he was back here for just a few years before the Aramco?
- Hodges: He must have come back in '46 or so, and then he was here until '52. That was about the time the stadium job ended.

There's one other name--Norval Miller--that doesn't come up in any of this.

*The projects simply stopped--no more landing strips were needed. - H.L.

- Hussey: Yes, he lives out in Orinda, I think.
- Hodges: Yes, and he worked for Mr. Steilberg while I was there, and then after I left.
- Hussey: He was in Kodiak too?
- Hodges: He was in Kodiak, but I think very briefly. He went right on through to--where I did see him--Attu, I guess, and then he came back to officers' school.
- Hussey: Then he went over to Rome later.
- Riess: So Mr. Steilberg took friends--people that he knew--to Rome?
- Hussey: There was a man who was already working for Aramco, Phil Buskirk, and I think he suggested Walter Steilberg to the chief engineer of Aramco.
- Riess: As a structural engineer?
- Hodges: Yes, who worked well with architects.
- Hussey: So then he wrote a letter to Mr. Steilberg about wanting to recruit some men, and Walter Steilberg got quite a few of us. We went over to interview in San Francisco.
- Riess: But when you were out there you weren't working together?
- Hussey: No, I wasn't. Some of the fellows were working in the same office in Rome, but I was in Arabia.
- Riess: Was that the case with you, Mr. Hodges?
- Hodges: I worked with Mr. Steilberg in his office; he was there. But when he left I stayed on for another year.
- Riess: Was that a situation that he enjoyed?
- Hodges: He enjoyed the work, though some of it was frustrating.
- Riess: We were talking before about the bureaucracy...
- Hodges: But he enjoyed the work; he always enjoyed the work, and he enjoyed people. He wasn't ever dissatisfied; he always worked something out.

- Hussey: Going through my own things recently I found a letter that I had written to him and also a letter that he had written to me, telling about the difficulties in Arabia and in communications. For instance, over there I received a telegram one time that Ted Finney was coming down. Well, Ted Finney was sitting at my desk when I recieved the telegram. [Laughter.]
- Hodges: That's about right.
- Hussey: When it went over there it had to go through the original office, down to the chief engineer, down to the district engineer and whatnot, and finally over to my office--all this red tape we had to go through.
- Hodges: Mr. Buskirk started that whole Arabian ball rolling. Mr. Steilberg had done a house for him.
- Hussey: Oh, here in Berkeley?
- Hodges: One addition here in Berkeley. Then Buskirk was working for someone in the City, and he met Mr. Steilberg there. He was doing structure for some office.
- Hussey: Was Buskirk the architect, and then Walter did the structure?
- Hodges: On one house; I think there was a little addition down there by the Rose Garden. The other one, I don't know. He worked with Buskirk on two buildings.
- Hussey: How long had Mr. Buskirk been with Aramco? Had he been there for some time?
- Hodges: He'd been in Rome for a year and a half or so, or maybe even two, before we got there. He thought they needed Mr. Steilberg, and I think they did. [Laughter.]
- Hussey: Yes, I often wished that Walter could have run the place.
- Hodges: It's too bad.

V BAY AREA RESIDENCES AND OTHER WORK

- Riess: Another thing that Steilberg said in the interview, speaking of modesty (it's sort of a parallel to saying that his two years of teaching in Kodiak were the most satisfying), was that the row of poplars that he planted on Mosswood Road was his major achievement.* [Laughter.] That's the sort of thing that lasts, I guess, and concrete is always crumbling.
- Hodges: Well, he had a lot of little wry remarks like that. He's very retiring, all right, but I think he knows that some of his buildings are going to last longer than those poplars. He was really very interested in maintenance, in reducing it.
- Hussey: I was wondering about the Fabricrete buildings--he did a couple** up there on Panoramic Way of his own, I think. Then down in Los Gatos for Colonel Wood. Do you know if he did any others?
- Hodges: I don't know of any others. I know he had a little legal trouble with it.
- Hussey: Yes, there was a letter in the file about it--overrun of expense on one of those houses.
- Hodges: No, I mean also on that type of construction; someone else challenged him in court. But he had a patent on it, fortunately. I don't remember how that came out.
- Hussey: I remember there was something there about an application for a patent.
- Hodges: Well, the application was all he needed to prove the date.
- Hussey: Somebody claimed a similar system at that time?
- Riess: Another architectural firm he worked with was Porter and Steinwedell?

*No--on Orchard Lane, in front of his own home. - H.L.

**Three: 4 Mosswood Lane, 101 Panoramic Way, and, for Charles and Florence Mel, Mosswood Road. - H.L.

- Hodges: Yes, Porter worked with Gardner Dailey for years, and then went on his own. In fact, Porter, I think, did his best work when he was with Dailey--with the Red Cross Building.
- Riess: When Walter Steilberg had his own office from 1922 to 1942, he said that he had two men working with him. Were these always the same two men?
- Hussey: No, I don't think so. For instance, when I worked for him in '23, I think I was the only one at that particular time. Other times he had other people working, and so on. He never did have a large office, of course.
- Riess: Can you remember who some of the other people were?
- Hussey: No, I can't.*
- Riess: What I'd like to be able to include with the memoir of Walter Steilberg is at least a list of things in the area that people can go and look at. It's hard to do an exhaustive thing. [See appendices.]
- Hodges: I don't know too many of his residences. I recognize one when I see it. [Laughter.]
- Riess: Do you really?
- Hodges: Yes, it's pretty easy.
- Hussey: He was very fond of arched windows, and the Chinese tiles. But on a lot of these residences [referring to drawings he has been sorting out] it just says, "Piedmont" or something. One has an address--Le Roy Avenue in Berkeley--but a lot of them just say, "Oakland" or "Berkeley."
- Hodges: We worked on the Lipmans' residence--made an addition to that--which is up above the Claremont there somewhere. It's in Oakland. It's on that street that starts in Berkeley and winds up in Oakland [180 Stonewall Road]. Speaking of styles, that's quite a nice Spanish style house with a tile roof. And the Parsons' house, which doesn't look much like Walter Steilberg, but he did that. Most of them looked very much alike.
- Hussey: He did the Kodiak Baptist Church here, and a Lutheran church. You don't happen to know about that, do you?
- Hodges: No, I don't. We were just inundated with Navy work when I was there; there was no time for anything--we were working up to

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Hodges: twelve hours a day for seven days a week.

Hussey: I don't seem to have that Lipman house.

Hodges: They may have bought it from someone else, but I think he designed it for them.* The only things we did of his when I was there was the Lipman house, and Remmer and Jordan Pontiac Agency in Oakland somewhere, and an addition to the Chapel of the Chimes in Santa Rosa--which was a really magnificent room. He was always building those crematorium columbarium things with little tiny niches, and every wall is lined with them. Then he built those huge movable skylights that would roll off in nice weather. He loved to do that.

He was a railroad engineer at some point in his life, and he loved dealing with metal wheels and tracks. [Laughter.] At the Royal Hawaiian, that wall is a masterpiece of railroad engineering, because all those huge doors are rolling on the floor with little railroad wheels and little railroad tracks to support those huge doors--what are they, sixteen feet high, of steel?

Hussey: At the Royal Hawaiian?

Hodges: At the Royal Hawaiian, in that new dining room that Gardner added.

Hussey: They were building the Royal Hawaiian while I was there in Honolulu in 1927, and they were having a great deal of trouble with the sinking of it. Did you know that?

Hodges: Yes.

Hussey: They did a rather interesting thing. (They said it was built over a Hawaiian graveyard, so that was one of the reasons--a bad omen.) But anyway, they put some tremendous beams there, and they loaded three columns onto one steel beam, and then loaded that onto one footing and jacked it down into the ground with three times the weight on it, until that one would get down. Then they would change around and jack another one down in there, and try to get it to a place where it would stop.

Hodges: I think the Surfrider floats on...I think some of the walls were designed...Do you remember the Women's Club that he designed for Julia Morgan? It was somewhat on that same order, where he used interior partitions as eight-, nine-, or ten-foot deep beams (whatever the ceiling height was) and verinda [sic] girders throughout. I think that's what he did with Surfrider. And then, of course, somebody poked a door right where we didn't want it. [Laughter.]

*See Lawton chapter on W.T.S.

Riess: It sounds like after Rome you were back here working with him since.

Hodges: Let's see, how did that happen? Yeah, I worked for Gardner Dailey when I came back, We were doing Hertz Hall and Morrison, and then we were doing some other things too.

Riess: So it was just sometimes working with Walter and sometimes not?

Hodges: No, I worked steadily with Walter from about early '47 to the end of '50--four years straight.

Riess: Was this out of his office at Orchard Lane?

Hodges: Right, #1 Orchard Lane. Then I did some work on my own for about a year, and went with Bill Corlett, who was another sort of protege of Walter's. I worked there a year and then went to Aramco, and of course I worked with him there for a year.

Riess: How about in the fifties and sixties?

Hodges: I became very ill in about '56, and I was in the hospital and sort of banged up for three or four years and was really forced to retire. So I haven't done much work since then, except a little on my own.

Hussey: By the way, there's the Greenbrae School for Will Corlett that was among the things; he did some engineering on it.

Hodges: Yeah, Walter did that. He sort of sent me to Bill Corlett because he wanted to be able to work through someone in the office that knew his way of working. Mr. Steilberg is a little difficult to work with. I don't mean difficult: I mean that he goes so fast that you have to know what he's saying or you miss it. He doesn't always talk as fast as he thinks. He has everything all worked out, but it isn't always that clear. So it takes a lot of erasing, I guess is what you'd say.

Hussey: [Mr. Hussey working on compiling a list.] There was Remmer and Jordan Pontiac in Oakland, the Lipmans' near Claremont, the I-House, and the Chapel of the Chimes. Was there any other that you mentioned?

Hodges: None that I've worked on, no. Then, of course, Dailey's office did the Royal Hawaiian, Surfrider, and Princess Kaiulani. He did just addition and renovation to the Royal Hawaiian, and then he did the other two.

I'm trying to think--we were doing so darn much work. We were working on the museum and the Red Cross, and Remmer and Jordan.

- Hussey: Do you mean the monastery or the museum?
- Hodges: Yes, the monastery. Julia Morgan had done some drawings for it to be incorporated into it.*
- Riess: I'd like to be able to recognize a Walter Steilberg structure when I see it, so tell me what to look for.
- Hodges: Well, he just solved every problem in his way, without any beating around the bush. It was neatly and cleanly and beautifully done. You can't place the style, but it's quite stylish. And they all look a little German.
- Hussey: I hadn't thought of that, but I guess you're right.
- Riess: You don't mean in the sense of Bauhaus, do you?
- Hodges: No, the old German Gothic, almost. He used a lot of half timber and stucco effect, and an arched little entrance protection.**
- Hussey: And he liked those Chinese tiles.
- Riess: But there are a lot of those Chinese tiles around. For instance, there's a stucco-colored house on Hearst, where it rises up.
- Hodges: That's Mr. Steilberg's.
- Hussey: Yes, right opposite the President's House [University House]. I'm not sure who that was done for.
- Hodges: I know it's his, but I don't remember the name. He was always very pleased with that house because it had been a tremendous financial success. The people became ill, I think, and they sort of lived from the proceeds of that house for the rest of their lives. It's a lovely house; it's a lot like his own. He was a fine architect. There's no reason why he couldn't design anything.
- Hussey: Here's one for Harold Sawyer--Stonewall Road, Oakland.
- Hodges: That may be the Lipman house. It must have been built for Sawyer, and then we added to it later. [Sawyer original owner. - H.L.]
- Hussey: You don't happen to know anything about the Yosemite Power Company, do you?
- Hodges: No.

*The drawings, many of them done in Spain, were W.T.S.'

**W.T.S. used both stucco and wood as exterior finishes, delineating different rooms or areas of a building, but I don't recall his use of half timber in the classic German Fachwerk style, except in the Wetmore house, 2323 Hearst Ave. (See Berkeley Gazette, 9/24/75). - H.L.

- Hussey: There were a lot of drawings there for a dam or something.
- Hodges: You know, when I was working in his office I didn't work on all the jobs, and it's hard to remember something you weren't actually working on.
- Hussey: Was there anyone else there at the time you were there?
- Hodges: My wife [Verna Hodges] was there part of the time; Norv Miller was there part of the time. He had quite a staff there when the museum was going.
- Riess: Who did he bill for the museum work? Was that Hearst or Julia Morgan or who?
- Hussey: By that time it had been given to the city, hadn't it? It was given to the city about 1941.
- Hodges: Yes. It might have been Miss Morgan. She might have gotten a little money from the city to draw up a proposal or a presentation of a proposal for its use.
- Hussey: There was quite a discussion as to where it would be.
- Hodges: But Steilberg was a thorough man. We did a plot plan of the monastery where it was in Spain. There were two peaks near the museum, so when we showed it in Golden Gate Park we had to make the plot plan big enough to show Twin Peaks in San Francisco--to show it was going to be in a place similar to its original site.
- Riess: Do you remember when Mr. Steilberg got the first inkling that it really wasn't ever going to happen?
- Hodges: The museum? I think when the vandals burned the crates was probably the worst time.
- Riess: There was always hope up to that point?
- Hussey: There were letters in the files indicating that evidently the first two fires weren't so bad, but it was by about the third or fourth fire that they began to decide they had about had it. It was a shame. It had sort of a sad ending.

Transcriber: Judy Johnson
Final Typist: Marilyn White

Re: Walter T. Steilberg
 Consulting Architect
 1 Orchard Lane
 Berkeley, California 94704

Excerpts from my file:

"My memories--which are quite clear from 1890 on, began in a world as different from the present as 1890 was different from the dawn of 'civilization.' I hope that in a few weeks or months I can record in a readable style some of my observations in the various parts of the world where I have worked. If I can do that, I shall certainly need your services. . . ."

Letter dated July 18, 1968.

KODIAK NIGHTS
 September '42

So now I lay me down to hear
 The trucks and jeeps a-changin' gear.
 A plane roars out--so low, so near
 My hands get moist from sudden fear.

Two men are quarrelin' 'cross the hall
 A radio screams--right through the wall,
 Announcements of a Spokane sale;
 And then the Andrews' sister's wail.

The night-shifts work from now 'til dawn
 With screech and whang of power sawin',
 With hammer blows on wood or steel
 With blank of chains and whirr of wheels.

Young roommate staggers in half drunk,
 And stumbles, cursin' to his bunk--
 "God damn them perfumed squealin' whores";
 Then groans, and sobs, and moans; then snores.

The clatter of pneumatic drills,
 The crash of rock in roadway fills.
 Two whistles blow--one deep, one shrill.
 O Lord, when will this night be still?

And so--

If I should die before I sleep,
 I pray the boss my check to keep
 To help to build some quieter hell,
 Where workin' men can rest a spell.

(I had Mr. Steilberg's permission to make copies of this for some of my friends who were working on the Alcan project later.)

RE: WALTER T. STEILBERG

Excerpts from personal letter from Mrs. Dorothy Cox Yetter, dated Dec. 1971:

"Idea for a tape recording of WTS is terrific. . . . hope they can finance it and the ball . . . gets rolling, as it would be a tribute to a warm, wonderful man.

"I have tried to recall some anecdotes which would be acceptable and useful, but after 10 years I can remember fragments. Mr. S. had a humorous anecdote about when he was working for Arabian Oil Co. (he said they were picking his brain). Mr. S's American co-workers played a joke and taught a new little Arab boy employee a few words of English with which to greet the big boss from the U.S.A. The boy thought he was saying 'Good morning, Big Boss,' but in reality said with a big smile 'Good morning, Big-son-of-a-b-boss.' And WTS with just as big a smile replied good-humoredly, 'Hello, you little b-s-t-r-d,' at which point everybody was grinning!

"He could never bring himself to hunt. One day as a small boy he shot a rabbit, not quite killing it. It lay suffering and dying, crying like a baby. Since that time he never again hunted.

"Once when his oldest daughter was small she quite candidly and innocently informed him that he looked like a St. Bernard!

"If I think of any other bits will let you know. George and Verna Hodges were draftsmen in the office at the same time I was and have known WTS for years and years. Verna now works for Mr. Michael Goodman as draftsman and could probably tell you some things. She is very nice. She and George were working in Rome for the Arabian Oil Co. when Mr. S. was there. George was in the Aleutian Seabees when WTS was instructor there during WW II. Mr. S. loved the Alaskan country and would have stayed there had not family ties brought him back to Berkeley in 1946 when I first went to work for him.

"He had brought back a couple of 'characters'--a big Alaskan tom cat named Timmy who nearly drowned you with affection while drooling and showed how much he "dug" you by sinking his big Alaskan claws in your leg! Lovingly, of course. A big black Labrador dog called 'Chump' literally 'floored' you with greetings and when you found a chair to sit in tried to sit in your lap, because, you see, he really thought he was a 'lap' dog. He was a source of much amusement for the family.

"I think it is a fine thing to do to honor a man of the stature of WTS while he is still living and can know how much he has been appreciated and the lasting effect he has left on many lives and the community.

"Give my best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. WTS when you talk to them."

-2-

Re: Walter T. Steilberg, Consulting Architect

"From the start of the San Simeon 'castle' I worked with Julia Morgan, Architect, on the structural design of the Guest Houses, A, B, and C. I supervised much of this part of the construction and made many inspection trips to the job, but had no part in the architectural design and very little in the structural design of the castle itself, in the northerly tower of which the carillon was to be installed."

"After establishing my own office in 1922 I continued to do much of Miss Morgan's structural design, and I remember that sometime about 1924 I happened to meet the U.C. Berkeley Chimesmaster, Mr. Weikel, in Miss Morgan's office when he was giving her some information about the purchase of the bells. Mr. Weikel, a competent musician, was rather horrified at the W.R.H. proposal that the console be 'automated,' like a player piano, so that any one could play anything from 'Chopin's Funeral March' to 'Rock-a-Bye Baby.'"

A few of the projects on which Mr. Steilberg worked are listed below:

California Hall - Changes of 1966 (Germano Milono, Architect)

Cowell College, UC-Santa Cruz

Greek Theatre Improvements

Campanile

Strawberry Creek Culvert

Kings' Daughters' Home

Manila Memorial

American Red Cross Building

Bears' Lair

Sather Tower

Memorial Bench of the 1920 Class UC-

UC Berkeley Faculty Club

UC Mining Building

Many private residences

San Mateo County Jail

Stadium

UC Music Building

Lair of the Bear Swimming Pool

San Simeon State Park

If I am not mistaken, I believe he was even abroad for some years and was asked to consult with Italian architects regarding the "Leaning Tower of Pisa."

I have done secretarial work for Mr. Steilberg for years and years. He was one of the first "clients" at the Southgate Typing Bureau and one of their favorites, too.

If I can add anything further, I would be more than glad to do so. I remember typing résumés for him re Julia Morgan and Architect Maybeck, both of whom he admired tremendously. I believe I even did one for him but I can find no record of it in my files.

When I talked to Mrs. Steilberg and him at Christmas time, they had both been having health problems.

I do so hope The Bancroft Library will be able to get a taped recording from him soon. Anything I can do to expedite matters I will be more than willing to undertake.

Sincerely,

written by Walter Steilberg

SUMMARY OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

B.S. University of California, 1910; post graduate work in U.C. Engineering Materials Laboratory, 1933; travel study in Europe 1913-14 and in 1927; State Certificate to practice architecture B-683, 1911.

Experience in railway and building construction 1904, 1905; experience in architectural design, structural design and construction supervision in the offices of J.G. Howard and J. Morgan of San Francisco; Russel Ray of Santa Barbara; and Walter Reed of Oakland 1910 to 1917. Structural draftsman on construction of Bethlehem Shipyard, Alameda, 1917, 1918. Chief draftsman and construction superintendent, office of J. Morgan, San Francisco 1918-21.

Established an independent practice in San Francisco 1921. Practice has consisted chiefly in consulting work of a technical nature for other architects; specifications, advice on special problems, and structural design in steel-frame, timber, masonry, and reinforced concrete. Buildings have been of many different types and have ranged in cost from a few thousand dollars to a million dollars. From 1935 to 1940 considerable time was devoted to the direction of test programs for various new types of construction sponsored by the Pacific Coast Aggregates of San Francisco, Basalt Rock Company, and other industries.

From April 1942 to February 1946 structural engineer, Kodiak Naval Operating Base, for the last three years of that time in public works department of U.S. Navy. This work included a wide variety of types of buildings as well as kinds of construction; barracks, warehouses, wharves, derricks, stacks, magazines, housing, hangars, culverts, recreation buildings, gun emplacements, and small bridges. The distance from main sources of supply made it necessary to resort to many unusual schemes of structural design and the employment of materials in other than standardized manner.

Independent practice reestablished in Berkeley in February, 1946. Work has been chiefly of a structural nature. Recent work has included structural design of the American Red Cross Building, San Francisco, additions to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu, Surf Rider Hotel, Honolulu (Gardner Dailey, Architect), Industrial Indemnity Building, Sacramento (White and Hermann, Architects), additions to the U.C. Mining Building and reconstruction of the California Farm Bureau Federation Building, Berkeley (Michael Goodman, Architect). Repair and reconstruction of the U.C. Football Stadium, Strawberry Creek Culvert By-Pass and special reports on various buildings and building groups for the University of California.

Associate George C. Hodges was a chief in the 23rd battalion of the Sea-Bees and his experience at Kodiak and since is as indicated above. Draftsman Norval Miller was in the 38th battalion of the Sea-Bees and has also had structural experience as chief of party of survey crew for the Alaskan Railway. Draftsman Edward A. Tufts, A.B. in Architecture, U.C. 1950, was a pilot in the Army Air Corps. Practical training in structural design principally in this office.

[Note: This summary dates around 1949, as many later projects are omitted. It is clearly slanted to structural engineering, with minimization of design experience; it was probably directed toward prospective clients. HSL]

written by Walter Steilberg

EDUCATION

High School: San Diego, 1904 graduate in college preparatory ("classical") course.

University: University of California, Berkeley. B.S. degree 1910, majoring in architecture and structural engineering.

Graduate studies: Year of travel-study in Europe 1913-1914.
Year of travel-study in Europe 1927.
Laboratory research in concrete, U.C. 1933.

Office and Field Training:

Stonnard and Reif Architects, San Diego, summer jobs, 1896-1898.
W.S. Heblard and Irving Gill, Architects, San Diego, 1898-1902.
Myron Hunt, Architect, Los Angeles, 1904-1905.
Southern Pacific Company M. of W., Engineering Office, Los Angeles, 1905-1906.
John Galen Howard, Architect, San Francisco, 1908-1910 (1/2 time)
Julia Morgan, Architect, San Francisco, 1910-1913; 1915-1917; 1918-1921.
Bethlehem Shipyard, Alameda, Construction Office, 1917-1918.

Certification: Architect's License granted on passing 4-day written test, November, 1911; with 100% grade in all parts of the exam.

PRACTICE

Established office, San Francisco, 1921; work consisted of design of dwellings and gardens in Berkeley, Oakland and Los Gatos; structural design of large reinforced concrete buildings in various California cities and in Hawaiian Islands. After a year of study in Europe, re-opened office in Berkeley, 1928; architect for College Womens Club, Berkeley, and several residences, but major work was structural--field of structural design. Since I no longer employ draftsmen and can no longer make drawings which print clearly, I can offer only consulting services.

The Bancroft Library

University of California/Berkeley
Regional Oral History Office

Warren Charles Perry

REMINISCENCES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY
1904 TO 1954

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess



Warren Charles Perry
1960



John Galen Howard
Duomo, Florence, Italy
Spring 1911



"Future Famous Architects In the Making." W.C.P.
1948

Warren Charles Perry

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Interview # 1: February 25, 1975

I BERKELEY BOYHOOD

Riess: You were born in Santa Barbara?

Perry: Yes. My father moved from Santa Barbara to Berkeley when I was three years old. The family, including me and the Jersey cow, came up on the "Santa Rosa," the little steamer which was the only way to come before the railroad down the coast was built.

Riess: "Cow?"

Perry: Oh, I remember the cow. I was three then, and the cow lasted several years, apparently. Her name was Dolly Varden, of course, and my father used to milk her himself.

In Berkeley, our new house was built on the corner of Dwight Way and Benvenue Avenue, and we moved into it in 1887.

Riess: What kind of a house was it?

Perry: Oh, it was the sort of house that was being built at the time--a Victorian house, so-called, "two-story-and-basement," with a cupola on the corner of the upper story. That was where a friend of mine was staying the night with me and we were shaken out of bed by the 1906 earthquake. We didn't run out into the street, however, as most people did, but stayed in the cupola, where we had a beautiful view--there were no trees then--of all the people rushing out onto Dwight Way in their nightclothes, then suddenly coming to, and turning around to see if their house was still there before rushing back into the house again! [Laughter.] That was a real earthquake!

Well, to come back to my story--there were no public schools near us when I was very young. We had little classes, you know, a maiden lady who taught a group of the neighborhood children in their homes up and down our street. Then, when the new public school was built down on Dwight Way, just below Telegraph, we went there, through the seventh and eighth grades, and then on to Berkeley High School. I graduated from Berkeley High School in '03, then automatically, of course, went to UCB--the University of California at Berkeley.

Perry: I remember Martin Kellogg, one of the early University presidents, among others, and I remember Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst. As you know, Bernard Maybeck, who had settled in Berkeley, got Mrs. Hearst, who was a lovely, fine person, interested in launching the great competition for the University campus in Berkeley, which eventually was participated in by architects from all over this country and abroad, including John Galen Howard, of New York, and his then partner, Cauldwell.

II THE GREAT ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION, 1900

Perry: They got fourth place in the great competition, which was the greatest event, architecturally, that had ever happened here. The exhibition in the long concourse on the upper floor of the Ferry Building in San Francisco, filled with great drawings that few out here had ever seen the likes of, was truly a memorable occasion.

Riess: Do you think Mr. Howard came out to see the area before he did his plans?

Perry: I don't know. I'm not sure that he'd ever been out here. He was a Bostonian, and went to Boston Latin School, Harvard, and M.I.T. Later, of course, he went on to l' Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris where he had a brilliant record.

Riess: Of course, probably even Bénard wouldn't have come to study the site; nobody from abroad would have, anyway.

Perry: Bénard, the one who won the competition? Oh, no. He won the competition, after which he came out here. People got a brief glimpse of him, and he walked around the place and found there was nothing being built at the time, took his \$25,000 and went back to France. [Laughter.] He never came back, as far as I know.

Riess: Actually, I'm interested in who really judged the competition.* Was Maybeck involved in the judging?

*Jean Louis Pascal, Paris; R. Norman Shaw, London; Paul Wallet, Berlin; Walter Cook, New York; and J.B. Reinstein, San Francisco, representing Mrs. Hearst and the Regents, were the judges. Ferrier, Origin and Development of the University of California, Berkeley, 1930.

Perry: No, not as a judge.

Riess: When the great exhibition in the Ferry Building was held, was that something of general interest to the community, do you think, or just to architects?

Perry: Oh, to everyone here, of course. It had a great deal of publicity, especially in Berkeley, because in 1899 Berkeley was just a village, you know. There were really just three larger buildings on the campus, North Hall and South Hall and the old Library, and a few other scattered buildings with some cottages around the edge that were built for the faculty who didn't have homes of their own.

There was nothing north of the campus; it was all just rolling hills. We could sit on our porch on Dwight Way in those days, on a moonlight night, and hear the coyotes howling up there where North Berkeley is now. [Laughter.]

Riess: So when you decided to go to the University it was not a very imposing place?

Perry: It always was a place, and it always was a real institution, because there were outstanding men on the faculty here even then. Gayley, who came in 1889, Howison and Bacon--I can't remember them all-- [F.V.] Paget, who was the head of the French Department. There were really distinguished men in that early group. Of course, it was very small. I don't remember how many there were on the campus then, but in my graduating class in 1907 there were only four hundred or so.

Riess: Did you graduate in architecture?

Perry: No, in "natural science!" There was no degree in architecture then. In those days you could graduate from the University with a hundred and twenty units in practically anything. [Laughter.]

Riess: You were talking about the origins of the Architecture Department, with Maybeck and the Benard plan.

Perry: Well, at all events, through the competition, and through their getting fourth place, Mr. Howard came out. Whether or not he'd been here before, I'm not sure.

As I say, he was only twenty years older than I, so he was then quite a young man. But he was well established in New York. He had something to do with the Buffalo Exposition and did some of the

Perry: notable work there. And he'd done considerable work in New York and thereabouts. Of course, compared to the present-day great buildings, they were not large, but they were always distinctive and beautifully done. He had already made a name for himself. I think he was a Fellow of the Institute [FAIA] even then.

At all events, he met Mrs. Hearst and she took a real liking to him and asked him to do the first permanent large building that came out of the great competition, which was the Mining Building, built in memory of her husband, Senator [George] Hearst, who had been a miner--and quite a character too, at that. [Laughter.] It's a beautiful building, after all these years, all built around mining for gold, which was of paramount interest in California in those days. People were still looking for gold in the hills fifty years after '49!

As you probably know, the Mining Building was built as a more or less complete layout to train miners.

Riess: So there was a certain amount of underground...?

Perry: Yes, they even bored an "adit"--that's a mining tunnel--behind the Mining Building into the hills, where the boys could go in and dig, and build the framing and run the drifts. The big hall at the back end of it was built high, and in its present shape, to take a full-sized stamp mill, where they could pound the gold out of the ore.

Riess: I wonder what they found in the Berkeley hills?

Perry: Well, [laughter] I doubt whether they really found much there; but they had the adit, anyway, which was part of the show. The building was fortunately of such shape and character that it could, without too much trouble, be put to other uses after the mining business was more or less over.

Mr. Howard commuted from New York at that time, and one of the first buildings he did was the Greek Theatre for William Randolph Hearst. As you probably know, it was built in a natural amphitheatre where for the celebrations and "senior extravaganzas" they built a wooden stage in there, and all the business at the end of the college year and other student activities took place there.

Riess: That was called Ben Weed Amphitheatre.

Perry: Yes, that's right.

Riess: But you say that Mr. Howard didn't come out permanently then, at first?

Perry: No, not at that time. I'm not quite sure which was first--the Mining Building or California Hall. But California Hall was really the first building he built after his own heart. It was then the principal academic and administrative building. Old South Hall was still there, of course; it is a good building, though to us it's a bit quaint in architecture. But North Hall was of wood, and they were always afraid it would burn down, so it was eventually pulled down.

Riess: You say that California Hall was after his own heart?

Perry: Well, it was a comparatively simple building, and he was apparently able to treat it as an architectural whole in a way that appealed to him. It's still there, of course, and you'll remember the way the fine windows are handled, and the very beautiful copper cresting on the roof. It had the first really fair-sized assembly room, in the north end, which was big enough for meetings of the faculty and large classes.

Riess: The Mining Building is such a striking building. Are you saying that it was less Mr. Howard's type of building?

Perry: No, his architectural background and what was being done then was mostly so-called "classical," when it came to doing an important building, but in his work there was always a certain freedom and originality in handling design.

As for me, when I was young, my mother had always had the idea that I should be a civil engineer running railroads over the Andes and all that sort of thing, so when I entered college, I started in engineering. Then a very delightful chemistry professor from the University of Idaho came to stay with us and he talked me into industrial chemistry, so I switched to chemistry. Then I got fed up with chemistry and switched back to engineering. By that time my freshman and sophomore years were over. Then my father, who was a teacher at the Berkeley School for the Deaf, met Mr. Howard, whom he came to like very much.

Anyway, one day my father said to me, "Why don't you try architecture?"--which I did, and there was no question from then on.

At that time what later became the School of Architecture consisted of a handful of interested students. I think I'm the last of that early group. John Reid was the oldest one; he was Mayor Rolph's (later Governor Rolph's) brother-in-law.

Riess: Do you recall others from that early group?

Perry: Henry Gutterson was in my class--the class of '07. He had always intended to go into architecture. I can't remember the others. Walter Steilberg, whom you mentioned in your letter, came later than I.

At all events, we did little problems in design; I still have the drawings in the basement that I made there between 1905 and 1907.
[Laughter.]

Riess: Who were your professors?

Perry: Mr. Howard was the only one!

III BERNARD MAYBECK

Riess: Was Mr. Maybeck associated in any way with the University then?

Perry: Everybody in Berkeley knew Mr. Maybeck. He had done many buildings in Berkeley such as the Town and Gown Club, and things that were burned up later in the Berkeley fire, most of them with the characteristic Maybeckian approach in which such things as what we used to consider "common lumber" became a feature of the design and of the new forms that he developed. An outstanding example of this is the "high hall" in the Men's Faculty Club, which, long after, I extended to its present length. It was like the wooden architecture of the Middle Ages, in which there was no attempt to imitate Roman or Greek stone architecture: wood was wood. It differed in this from Georgian work, in which everything of wood was being built more or less in the classical tradition derived from an architecture of stone.

Riess: Do you think Maybeck was a learned man and he abandoned other styles and decided this was what he wanted? Or do you think it was just instinct?

Perry: Well, he was American, born in New York, and he went to the Beaux Arts, where one usually worked in a classical vein, and he, of course, did the Palace of Fine Arts for the 1915 Fair down here, in the Roman tradition, and did it beautifully. It has many highly original variations of his own, but on the whole it had the character of a great classical building of Imperial Rome!

Riess: Yes. It's important to remember that building.

Perry: Yes, it is important. And he did it after doing mostly small houses and things like that in Berkeley. He was a hard person to pin down; he was a great character.

Riess: I'm really interested in his relationship to the University, whether there was any consideration of having him back on the faculty later.

Perry: Of course he was older than I by quite a lot; he was a contemporary of Mr. Howard's at least. He always wore a beard and, rare in those days, he wore smocks and that sort of thing. He was always quite the talk of the town in Berkeley, which considered him a very extraordinary character. But he was always an influence there.

I'm not sure whether this is correct--the University records must show it--but I think he taught drawing in the University in the early days--mechanical drawing, or something of that sort. [Bernard Maybeck taught in 1894.] I think he may have been on the faculty, probably very casually, in the early days before Mr. Howard.

At all events, William Randolph Hearst thought that Maybeck and Julia Morgan were the "two greatest architects in the world." That was when they were doing the Women's Gymnasium over there. And the Women's Gymnasium is a perfect blend of Maybeck in his classical and his free design sides.

IV JULIA MORGAN AND THE HEARSTS

Riess: What did Julia Morgan contribute to the design of that gymnasium?

Perry: Of course she was younger than Mr. Maybeck and that building is recent compared to the earlier ones we've been talking about. Choosing Mr. Maybeck as architect may have been in memory of his work for Mrs. Hearst years before. William Randolph Hearst had become an admirer of Julia Morgan. So when Maybeck made the drawings for the Women's Gymnasium and they were submitted, the only trouble was that Maybeck, who was not interested in dressing rooms or shower baths or things of that sort, left out most everything of that kind in the building, which made it difficult to use as a gymnasium [laughter], but it's a lovely building.

In the meantime, the Hearsts had become fond of Julia Morgan. She was called in, as I remember, at the last minute, almost when the building was about to be built, to put in all the dressing rooms and shower baths and locker rooms and such that they'd have to have to operate.

I remember very well when the building was dedicated that Mr. Hearst came down from San Simeon for the opening reception. I remember very well that we all shook hands, and he made a short little speech about the new building. That's when he said that in his opinion Maybeck and Julia Morgan were the two best architects in the world.

Riess: Among the things I like best about the Women's Gymnasium are the San Simeon-like touches--the statuary at the pool, the urns, the dark marble, and all of that. Is that Julia Morgan, do you think? Or is that Maybeck?

Perry: Oh, that's probably Maybeck. But, of course, there had to be a lot of give and take on the practical side. But the whole concept of the building as an architectural form, and the ground and everything around it playing up to it, was Maybeck.

Riess: There was an earlier gymnasium that he designed for Phoebe Hearst that burned?

Perry: Oh, yes, Hearst Hall. That was all wood. That was one of the first big buildings that Maybeck did for the Hearsts.

Mrs. Hearst, you perhaps know, really took the University under her wing, perhaps because she was an old schoolteacher. She thought that the rapidly growing co-ed population wasn't being fairly treated. So she moved to Berkeley and bought a house that belonged to the Pennoyers on Channing and Piedmont--long since gone, I think--and had it for several years. One of Mrs. Perry's aunts was in the class of '88 at Berkeley, when, I think, there were only twelve girls in college. She remembered Mrs. Hearst well, as a wonderful person, a lovely person, particularly interested in the co-eds (as they were called in those days), and that's when this great wooden building, which was later called Hearst Hall, was built by Maybeck as a girls' gymnasium. That was a very interesting building. It had a great hall inside with Gothic arches of wood--everything of wood--and the whole exterior was covered with wood shakes. Of course, it was a fire trap, and it eventually burned up. But it lasted many, many years. In fact, it was the girls' gymnasium up to the time the new girls' gymnasium was built!

V JOHN GALEN HOWARD AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE ECOLE DES BEAUX ARTS
ON BERKELEY

Riess: Those four years you were on campus there were other buildings built-- the Anthropology Building [1904] (that's a building that has since been razed), the Senior Men's Hall [1906]--do you remember that?

Perry: The Senior Men's Hall--Mr. Howard did that. It's still there, isn't it?

Riess: Yes. I wondered in what spirit the log cabin kind of thing was conceived.

Perry: Well, that was Mr. Howard's idea. The senior class felt that they ought to have some hideout of their own that was all their own. At that time the Faculty Glade was just a wild spot. The Faculty Club was much smaller and the Women's Faculty Club hadn't yet been built. Mr. Howard conceived the idea of getting a lot of these great big redwood logs that were coming in here by shipload after shipload from up the coast, and building a log cabin. He did that; it's still there, I believe.

Riess: Oh, it certainly is.

The fact that buildings were being built while you were a student should have been a great inspiration to an architect.

Perry: I can't remember offhand...I'm almost ninety-one, you know. Anyhow, I was just a beginner, of course, and I had never had any real contact with architecture up to that time. I had no real concept of architecture as an art at all.

Work was going on at the University on the permanent buildings. California Hall, the Mining Building, the Greek Theatre were already built.

In the summer, Mr. Howard gave some of us jobs in his office. One

Perry: was Irving Morrow, later the consulting architect on the Golden Gate Bridge. When I graduated from college, Mr. Howard came to my father and said, "Warren must go to Paris--he must go to the school in Paris, the Beaux Arts." Of course, my father greatly admired Mr. Howard, so...

Riess: Before you get to the Beaux Arts and your story, I want to understand what you were saying: As students you would be given some of the work to do from Howard's office?

Perry: No, we were simply given jobs as draftsmen, and beginners at that.

When Mr. Howard moved out here and opened his office in San Francisco sometime before the earthquake, he built his own house up on Ridge Road, a lovely house with a little square tower and a beautiful high living room, a very charming and romantic house. And the first little Architecture Building on the campus also served as his office there, an attractive little building which is still there. It became the front part of the extensive one, principally of wood, which housed the school all the years before it was taken over to Wurster Hall.

One of the delightful things about those early days for the few of us that were in that little group were the Thursday afternoons we would have tea at Mr. Howard's house up on the hill above Hearst Avenue. Mrs. Howard, who turned out to be a most delightful person, would serve tea, and Mr. Howard would read to us about architecture. It got credit as a college course, but it was really a delightful afternoon affair. [Laughter.]

Riess: It sounds as though he was bringing some of his Boston culture to Berkeley.

Perry: Perhaps that was what he was doing. And the reason he always gave for starting to give courses in the University...He started the course in architectural history and he started the classes in design. (The Beaux Arts system is not to study drawing per se, but to learn drawing by designing buildings, by designing them in response to a given program, which could be for an office building, or it could be for a church, or it could be for this or that.) Mr. Howard would come in--he was the only teacher--on two afternoons a week and criticize what each of us was doing in response to this problem that had been given us. That was the time-honored Beaux Arts system.

Now, where were we?

Riess: You were saying that he told your father that you should go on to

Riess: study in Paris. It sounds like the choice for an aspiring architect would be to go or to go into somebody's office here in those days?

Perry: Or else go to a school in the East.

Riess: I guess there were some, weren't there?

Perry: Oh, yes! There were a lot--well, I think there were a dozen or more that were of any account. Harvard, M.I.T., and Pennsylvania, and a scattering in the Northeast. There was one in Chicago and a few inbetween.

So off I went. I was an only child, and my mother insisted on going with me, to the horror of her friends. She stayed a couple of weeks with me in Paris and saw that I escaped the evils of Paris, and then she wisely came home!

[Tape changes.]

Riess: You had said that your mother was deaf, and your father had met her where?

Perry: At the School for the Deaf in Columbus, Ohio. My father graduated from Marietta at about the end of the Civil War and was the valedictorian of his class at Marietta--it was a small but excellent college even in those days--and was immediately offered a job in a direction that he never had intended to follow at all, as a teacher up at the big School for the Deaf in Columbus.

My mother lost her hearing at the age of six from typhoid fever and was completely deaf. Her parents had died and the children were shipped all around--one to Philadelphia, one to Illinois, another to Ohio--and she was sent up there to the school. My father, who was by then the superintendent of the school in Columbus, met her there. Although quite deaf, she was apparently an attractive, bright little person. At all events, he proposed to her, and they were married when she was seventeen. I was born twelve years after that, when they had left the East and settled in Montecito, in Santa Barbara, where I was born.

Riess: What did you expect to find and hope for in the whole Beaux Arts situation?

Perry: Well, we were brought up by Mr. Howard, who was a devoted Beaux Arts man, and had made a brilliant record there--better than any of us ever made later! So there were no two ways about it. I've always

Perry: been supremely grateful to him, because I'd never been to Europe, and the world outside of Berkeley, California was rather a wilderness to me. I had been East a couple of times, but that was all. Every American who was heading for architecture then wanted to go to the school in Paris; there were a lot of wonderful fellows there in those days.

The arrangement was very simple: You had to get into the school, and you had to get in through competitive examinations, which were given twice a year, in drawing and the history of architecture and in various related subjects--a little related engineering and that sort of thing.

Usually there were about six hundred who took the examination twice a year. Of the, let us say, six hundred who took the examinations, only sixty could be taken in; and of the sixty, only fifteen could be foreigners. However, most of the Americans were college graduates and had an edge. There were a wonderful lot of fellows there: my namesake, William Graves Perry, who was about my age, whose firm, Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, were the architects of the restoration of Williamsburg. And Bill Lamb was there when I was there; he became a partner in the New York firm that built the Empire State Building.

Riess: Did you all live together?

Perry: Oh, no. I lived in a very nice little French pension for a year, and then a man I met there, Fitch Haskell, and I got an apartment in the Place St. Sulpice, where we lived very comfortably for two years and a half.

Riess: Had you learned French in Berkeley?

Perry: I had had only one year of French; I didn't know a from zed. But we rapidly picked up a little as we went along.

Once you were in the school, the system, architecturally speaking, was much the same thing I spoke of in connection with Mr. Howard's work at the University.

There were two classes--the Second Class, the lower class, which you got into after passing entrance exams. In that you had to do six problems, plus certain sketch problems and things of that sort. Then there was the First Class, the upper class--and the barrier between the two, after you got enough "mentions" or medals in the lower class, was engineering.

Perry: They gave quite a stiff course in engineering, so you dropped everything else and did engineering for about six months, including doing a big design problem in which the engineering was featured; the design of the building was not too important, but you had to work out all the construction in steel and stone.

Finally, you had to pass the oral examinations, which were always tough. If you were successful in that you were in the First Class, where you had to do ten architectural problems. Usually the older men who had some architectural experience behind them would get through the class in two or three years.

I got through the Second Class, and the engineering, and into the First Class. By then, I felt it was high time for me to come home. That was four long years, and I couldn't afford to come home in the meantime. My parents were not young, and it was time for me to fend for myself. By this time you must realize how I feel about it, that Mr. Howard was really my angel, who, for some strange reason, took a shine to me, and helped me along whenever he could. Eventually I succeeded him, however inadequately, as Dean in what became the School of Architecture.

Riess: Were you in touch with him when you were in Paris?

Perry: Oh, yes. On his sabbatical leaves from the University he used very commonly to go abroad. We were always in touch, and he kept in touch with my parents. When I got back from Paris, I went right into his office--still not knowing too much about American office practice. [Laughter.] All this was a wonderful thing for me, and I realize long afterwards that he was behind me all along; so I was indeed very lucky.

But to come back to our "being in touch" in those early days abroad, one of my happiest memories is of the week spent with him in Florence, in the spring of 1911, when we lived together in a little old house overlooking the Arno. It was not long after he had composed Brunelleschi, the first of his two great epic poems, and one day we stood together on the top of the famous dome of the cathedral and talked of it.

Riess: You started as an instructor?

Perry: Yes. I graduated from college in 1907. I got back from Paris in 1911 and went into Mr. Howard's office for a year, and also got a job as an instructor in the "Ark," which was what we called the old architecture building. By that time there were twenty or thirty students. Mr. Howard still gave the course in the History of Architecture once

Perry: or twice a week--lectures and lantern slides, which he had set up in the beginning.

From 1911 to 1918 I was an Instructor; from 1918 to 1923 I was an Assistant Professor; in 1927 I got a Professorship, and Mr. Howard nominated me for Director, later Dean, of the School, which was approved by our faculty.

Riess: Mr. William C. Hays was here?

Perry: Mr. Hays came out from Pennsylvania during the time I was in Paris. He was an honor graduate from Pennsylvania, a larger and more established School of Architecture than our little one. Then he settled out here.

Riess: Was he also in Mr. Howard's office?

Perry: Mr. Howard imported him. It was when Mr. Howard had just established his office in San Francisco and began to get considerable work. He couldn't find draftsmen who knew much about design, from his point of view. That's when he started to give courses in the University. There were two courses--the History of Architecture, and Design--which he personally conducted.

Riess: So it was partly out of his own need to find assistants...

Perry: ...that he started giving courses in the University. Yes, so I have understood.

VI JULIA MORGAN AT THE ECOLE DES BEAUX ARTS

Riess: What was Howard's acquaintance with Julia Morgan?

Perry: I know of nothing especially. She went to France about six or eight years before I did, and at that time there never had been any women admitted to the School, at least in architecture. She was a very determined little person, however. She tried the entrance exams several times, and it finally leaked out that it was just because she was a woman, and that there never had been a woman diplomée in architecture.

Perry: A French architect, a Prix de Rome man by the name of Chaussemiche, became interested in her. So he set up a little atelier consisting of Julia Morgan and another American student and he went to bat with headquarters, and she got in. Once in, of course, her French "comrades" reportably spent their time pouring water on her head and pushing her off the ends of benches. [Laughter.] But for a long time she was the only woman ever to get into the Architectural School of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Riess: Did she get all the way through to the diploma?

Perry: She completed all the work, but when you entered the school you had to state your age and when you were thirty, no matter where you were, you had to quit the school. The story was that she became thirty a month or two before the time she actually finished all the work, and they refused to give her her diplôme because she was over the age limit--of course, everybody else knocked three or four years off his age when he signed up for the school. [Laughter.]

Riess: Did you know Julia Morgan personally?

Perry: Yes! Not well, but I did know her and admired her. I had the honor of presenting her to the President of the University here for her LL.D. years later. She did a lot of very nice work. The great thing that happened to her, of course, was when Mr. Hearst became interested in her and in her work. That was when Hearst was going up fast, you know; and she, of course, eventually became the architect of San Simeon. You've been there, haven't you?

Riess: Yes.

Perry: He was very loyal to her, and that was her great opportunity. She did a lot of very nice work around Berkeley and in San Francisco--a lot of YWCA work. She did the YWCA over here. She did a lot of very nice work.

Riess: Do you think Hearst was mostly influenced by his mother in the choice of Julia Morgan? Or do you think it was an independent discovery? How did that work?

Perry: I have no idea, but his mother was gone before San Simeon got going. By the time Julia Morgan and Maybeck were doing the Women's Gymnasium in Berkeley, she had already done work for Mr. Hearst of one kind or another. I don't know to what extent.

Riess: I just wondered why he did choose her.

Perry: I don't know. His mother, of course, was a very important person in Berkeley and had been from quite an early time an admirer of Julia Morgan. I suppose that when Mr. Hearst became the person that he eventually was and conceived the idea of building the great castle up on the hill at San Simeon, Julia Morgan was very much in their confidence and estimation.

Riess: I'm trying to add as much as I can to the picture of Julia Morgan, because she was so "private" in many ways.

Perry: She was a retiring little person, but she had a mind of her own, and was really a strong and capable individual. She had little interest, I think, in "society," so to speak, but everyone admired her, and her office was much respected. She did the original building for the Heritage down here--the large retirement home down on Laguna Street, facing on the park, which I had the privilege of extending a few years ago to its present size. In the same vein, in Berkeley, opposite the Christian Science Church on Dwight Way, she did that very nice brick building for, I think, the Baptist Seminary.

Riess: Always just high quality work? Or do you think she did things that were surprising and innovative?

Perry: I think you mean by "quality work" that done in a usual or time-honored style or vocabulary, rather than that carried out in recently-conceived forms and by new methods--this has little to do with "quality." She didn't approach architecture from the standpoint, for instance, of Maybeck, who seemed to conceive of a building in its setting as an architectural whole and studied it as such, sometimes without too much concern for its functions. But she was a very good, sound architect. She was a good planner, and had a fine sense of design, developed and refined by the École in Paris.

VII OTHER ATELIERS

Perry: The all-important work in Design in the Beaux Arts was handled through architectural ateliers scattered around Paris near the school and presided over by various leading architects like Laloux, for instance, who had been Mr. Howard's patron. Once you got into the school, you had to be admitted to an atelier and to call formally on the architect who was the head of it. It was like a fraternity, you know: once in it, you never changed!

Riess: How did you make the choice between them?

Perry: Well, my friend from Berkeley, Harry Gutterson, who went to Paris ahead of me, got into Laloux's [atelier], which was Mr. Howard's old atelier twenty-five years before and would have been my choice. My friend Fitch Haskell, with whom I lived, went into Deglane's [atelier], who had been the architect of the Grand Palais in the Champs Elysees. So I eventually joined the [atelier of] Gaston Redon, who was an old chap who came around to give his criticisms in a Prince Albert coat and a silk hat. He had the post of "architect of the Louvre" and had his offices there. Of course, he didn't do any of the building of the Louvre; he was just a sort of architectural superintendent of the Louvre buildings, which, of course, are enormous.

Riess: That was a kind of limited viewpoint, nevertheless.

Perry: Somewhat, but he had been a Prix de Rome man, and a good architect. But there were some very good older men in the atelier, and if you were in a good atelier, you learned as much from them as from the patron of the atelier, who dropped in and gave you fifteen minutes once in a while. They were right with you and usually were interested in helping you along. You often picked up more from them than you did from the patron.

Riess: Julia Morgan's arrangement with just herself and someone else was unusual then?

Perry: Yes. Chaussemiche, though he was a Prix de Rome man, wasn't well-known like Laloux and Deglane, but may have been far more devoted to his two young disciples.

Well, it's a long story. But Julia Morgan was really extraordinary in her determination to get into the school and to actually do all the work for her diplôme--or DPLG (diplômé par le gouvernement), which is the equivalent of a license to practice in France.

Riess: She seems to have had an interest in teaching. Her practice seemed to involve doing a lot of teaching. Or maybe that is just the nature of architectural offices?

Perry: That's true. All good architects do that and all good architectural offices in the country are half schools, and when they take in a nouveau--a young graduate in architecture--they may lose money on him, but make it their business to bring him along. That's why a man who has made good may stay with the same office; it perhaps eventually may become his office, you see! And if times were poor--when there was a depression or something--and they lost their jobs, if they had built up a reputation with So-and-So, usually, other people might be glad to hire them.

Riess: Is that why you went in with Mr. Howard when you got back?

Perry: Yes. It was a fine office, doing important work. We were lucky to get in there.

VIII THE PRACTICALITIES OF EDUCATING ARCHITECTS

Riess: Another contemporary of yours was Walter Ratcliff, wasn't he?

Perry: Oh, yes, though he was a little older than I.

Riess: I understand from his son, Robert, that his father had studied chemistry, then toured Europe because of his interest in architecture, and then came into Mr. Howard's office and had all of his training with him.

Perry: That's quite possible. Walter Ratcliff had a connection with Louis Mc Farland, who was a pioneer North Berkeley real estate man, but Walter had always wanted to be an architect, though he never went to school in architecture and was older than the rest of us. In those days many real estate men had a sort of architectural office on the side that got out drawings for small buildings for them.

Riess: Since they were mostly dealing in undeveloped lots?

Perry: Yes. Walter worked his way up in this way and eventually became a pretty good architect. When his son [Robert] went to college, though, he went to the School of Architecture. He is a very nice chap and a successful architect; we know him very well.

Of course, when it comes to actually being in practice for yourself and being paid for it, no matter what the school background, you must have had a reasonable number of years of actual office experience in a good office or offices before you hang out your own shingle and do work on your own.

Riess: When you were Dean, did you in any way try to correct this? Because this seems like a problem--maybe it's not a problem--the idea that one is incomplete for so many years.

Perry: Well, it is the province of the School to teach theory. It cannot duplicate the thousandfold conditions of actual practice beyond a

Perry: limited point. In design it does this through a long series of increasingly complicated imaginary building problems as conceived by the student in response to given programs and developed by him under criticism by the instructor. This is the time-honored method in the creative arts of which I hope architecture is still one. Legally you cannot call yourself an Architect in California or any other state unless you have been licensed by the state. I was for ten years on the State Board of Architectural Examiners, and do know that people who are serious in wanting to be considered good architects are willing to fight their way through these barriers for the title "Architect." But graduation from a school of architecture in this country does not automatically give you the right to call yourself an architect.

I think all states in the union, as well as California, have architectural boards which use examinations to determine the fitness of people who are applying for licenses. And they are good, stiff examinations, including a lot of engineering and actually producing a drawing "en loge" (as we used to say)--by yourself in the examination room. You are given a program outlining the problem and, having brought your drawing board and your drawing instruments and your paper with you, in a day you have to produce a design in answer to this program, and make a reasonably good drawing of it, on which you are judged on your ability as an architectural designer. In addition to that, you have to pass a pretty stiff examination in architectural engineering and other things too.

There's a national organization of all the examining boards in the country, which has annual meetings--usually in conjunction with the American Institute of Architects conventions. It's very well controlled.

Riess: In terms of new materials, then, architects are continually falling behind.

Perry: Oh, there's no end to it. From the days when I was in actual practice--I did a little fair-sized work, and I did a good many smaller buildings--and particularly in the last twenty years, there has been a flood of new materials. For me, the unfortunate thing about it is that when a firm--even a very good firm--gets the job of doing, perhaps, a four or five million dollar building--which eventually has to be built, of course--the tendency is more and more, when you are looking for the elements of your design for the building, to use things that are stock--things that are made in response to a certain type of construction.

Perry: Thirty or forty years ago, if you had a big building to do, you needed only to have a general idea of what the actual engineering of the building would be. You had a background of fundamental structure--stone work, for instance. If the building was a stone or a wood frame, you had had good training in that work.

But when it comes to a building which is fifty stories high and which wouldn't be possible to build in the way even a great Gothic church could be built, it becomes primarily a major engineering problem with forms and proportions of its own. You have to start with the engineering, with its stock manufactured elements and details, then get what architecture you can out of it. It's like being given a box of blocks and then piling them up in different ways in the effort to get a pleasing shape.

In the old days, you arrived at it differently. The various elements and their details evolved from the basic design. And, of course, there were certain traditional forms, which even in a building that could be built the old way, must needs be built in a modern way. An extreme illustration would be a vaulted Gothic church, a building form which comes down through the ages more or less unchanged. Although its stone skeleton and the way in which it was put together were entirely responsible for its shape and detail, it must now be used merely to clothe a frame of steel.

IX JOHN GALEN HOWARD'S WRITINGS

Perry: Howard was a poetic sort of man. The last one [book that he wrote] was Pheidias [1929], the second of a series of epic poems on great architects. The first, in 1913, was Brumelleschi, (the architect of the Cathedral in Florence). I think it was read to a University meeting, or something of that sort. [See reprints of Poems, 1907-1913, J.G. Howard.]

In his later years, he renewed his old acquaintance with Greece and went there several times--when he conceived the idea of writing a great epic poem on the life of Pheidias, the architect-sculptor of the Parthenon. You've seen it, haven't you?

Riess: No, I haven't.

Perry: I'll lend it to you. It's a marvelous thing. Much of it was written during a spring and summer when they were settled on a little island off the south coast of France, a little island near Marseilles. Just after we had moved into this house in 1925 (2530 Vallejo Street), we had the Howards over to dinner. He brought the manuscript of Pheidias, and read to us all evening from it, not long before it was published.

Take it and read it. You can visualize Mr. Howard's personality more from that than you can from a lot of other things, I think. But I want you to take care of it because of what he wrote in it when he gave it to me: "To Warren C. Perry, pupil, friend, co-adjutor, chief, with warm affection from the author, J.G. Howard."

Interview #2: 5 March 1975

X TIMOTHY PFLUEGER, ROBERT HOWARD, AND SOME BERKELEY CLASSMATES

[This interview opens with conversation and questions about persons Mr. Perry may have known through his associations with architecture and with the University of California, both as student and professor.]

Perry: [Looking at pictures.] Robert Howard (Mr. Howard's second son), the sculptor, had gotten a great reputation all of a sudden, when he was quite young, with that famous dolphin statuary outside of the Academy of Sciences Building in Golden Gate Park. He made a number of delightful small-scale studies of things to go on the Edwards Field and track stadium that I did [1932]--great big groups and smaller individual figures, or pairs of figures, over the doors in the west side of the big concourse. They all went, poof!, just like that [laughter], as soon as the bids came in! That so often happens.

Riess: Before I turned on the tape recorder, Mr. Perry, we were looking at this picture of Timothy Pflueger, with Diego Rivera, [Art Week, January 18, 1975] and you were saying that Pflueger took it into his own hands to be sure that Rivera's things were not lost when the budget was cut on the Stock Exchange Building.

Perry: He did with the Stock Exchange Building, certainly.

He got Ralph Stackpole to do the two fine monumental granite groups on the street front. Rivera did the fresco in the interior stairway, up near the top--a tremendous, great fresco. I think people like Helen Wills appeared in it.

The part of the building with the columns in front was not his; it was the original Stock Exchange, though he may have done it too, as he worked as a draftsman for years with Miller, who was later his partner. Pflueger was really the designer of the firm. He did 450 Sutter Street--the big medical office building. Incidentally, Michael Goodman, who was working for Pflueger at that time, did all that fine "Aztec" decoration at 450, the exterior terra cotta work.

Perry: Pflueger also did what to me was the best work architecturally in the Exposition over on Yerba Buena in 1939. Michael Goodman worked for him quite a little; he was very fond of Michael Goodman.

Riess: I have a few questions on your early days at the University. Did you know, in your class of 1907, Cornelia Stratton, who married Carlton Parker?

Perry: Yes, I knew Cornelia very well. We were classmates in college. I was going to Berkeley High School then (that was long before I had any idea of any kind of architecture), and she was going to Oakland High School.

Of course, every high school had to have a graduation play, so Harry [Henry] Gutterson and Connie Stratton stuck their necks way out and undertook to star in The Taming of the Shrew in old Macdonough Theatre in Oakland. It was a real event. I remember the occasion very well, and that was the first time I ever saw Connie Stratton, who was the shrew--and she was a marvelous shrew, as I remember.

Henry Gutterson was in my class of 1907. He had entered college with the idea of becoming an architect, but I did not discover it till two years had gone by.

Riess: Did you say he was from Oakland?

Perry: Yes. At all events, the first time I ever saw either one of them was in The Taming of the Shrew. [Laughter.]

Riess: It was such a production that even a person from Berkeley would have gone down to Oakland to see this?

Perry: Well, there was no theatre in Berkeley, and even the University itself was a very simple affair. To go to the theatre, you went to San Francisco or you went to Oakland. Macdonough Theatre was a very nice little theatre.

XI THE GROWING SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT BERKELEY

Perry: But to return to the School of Architecture, as you probably know the "course" in architecture (it didn't rate the title of "school," or anything of the sort in those days) consisted really of a course in history that Mr. Howard built up himself. Mrs. Hearst gave him five or ten thousand dollars to get a little architectural library started. Using those books as material, and other material as well, Mr. Howard built up the lantern slide collection of a few hundred that served clear up into my time. It was continually added to over the years, but the nucleus of it was the little bunch of slides that Mr. Howard had made so painstakingly for every lecture in those first years.

The whole course for the History of Architecture ran, I think, over three years. Chronologically it started way back with the Egyptian and climbed its way up through the Greek, Roman, and the succeeding years into the Gothic--the Middle Ages--and on up into the Renaissance and more or less modern times. He was a busy man, but he did a wonderful job, because there was nothing of that sort at the University, and very little, out here, of any scholarly quality.

When Mr. Howard began professional work out here, he started in rented offices down in Berkeley and did a couple of the better eight- or nine-story buildings in Berkeley's center, the two banks down at Shattuck and Center Streets, which had offices above. Most of the architecture in downtown Berkeley was pretty bad; most of it was just frame. The drafting courses, which later became the backbone of the School of Architecture, for several years (when I was first a student) had two or three rooms in the top floor of one of these buildings downtown, but actually started in a little building called the Eastman Block, which was a little two-story frame building at the corner of Center and Oxford Streets. The old Berkeley High School was a small three-story frame building just down the block on Center Street.

When Mr. Howard started the design courses, there was no proper

Perry: room available on the campus. There were only a half a dozen students or so, and they were in different grades--like in a country school. The history lecture courses were for years given up in the little old astronomy building on the north edge of the campus and were quite popular with the townspeople who used to like to come to them as visitors.

Riess: I have here the University catalogue of classes from 1912. It's interesting to me to see how many things Mr. Howard really was teaching. He did all the history classes...

Perry: Oh, yes, and all the classes in Architectural Design as well.

Riess: And then there was a Mr. Seawall?

Perry: Seawall taught watercolor. He was a very good artist, a painter.

Riess: So as an undergraduate what you did in your first couple of years had little to do with architecture?

Perry: I started architecture in my junior year; most of the previous work counted toward a Bachelor's Degree. All you had to do, really, to graduate at the end of four years in those days was to have a hundred and twenty units of most anything. [Laughter.] I had a considerable amount of math and drawing--descriptive geometry and that sort of thing--because of all my searching around in the University, so I graduated at the end of four years without any trouble.

Riess: In 1911 when you came as Instructor, you were teaching Elements of Architecture, which was drawing the orders?

Perry: Yes, and small design problems; but I was an "assistant" to Mr. Howard in all the work in Design.

Riess: Could you look at a series of drawings by people of the classic orders and pick out who was a genius, who was gifted, or who was really not going to succeed?

Perry: Of course, I was somewhat of a beginner myself in those days...but you usually knew a good student, even then. But Mr. Howard very quickly started even beginners with design. It might be a very simple little building, but they had to design it, whether they knew much about it or not. It was usually obvious which were the ones that had that rare gift of dreaming up something in answer to a given program. To that extent, you could pick good architectural students rather early.

Of course, after my four years in Paris, when I came back to go

Perry: on our faculty, the School of Architecture over here seemed a kindergarten compared to the Paris school. Once over there and in the school, you were plunged into the whirl of "big design," whether you were up to it or not. Some survived and some didn't.

Riess: So there were places where it would be useful to be a "creative dreamer" person?

Perry: Oh, some such gift would be essential, though, of course, there are other demands too!

Riess: Well, it sounds as if the demands of the program were so extreme in Paris that you couldn't go too far off on a flight of fancy.

Perry: Well, while we're on the subject, I should go into a little detail because the system in Paris and what we followed in our school here consisted, at all levels of Design, of a succession of design problems, which were usually about a month in length, in Paris often longer.

Of course, in Paris, you first had to get into the school through rather tough competitive examinations. If you'd gotten that far and were accepted in an atelier, you could take all the problems that came along to add to the required total, or you could take a trip somewhere and miss a problem or two. But when you were thirty years old, you had to get out [laughter], wherever you were.

You would sign up for a given problem, go to the school on the day set, and go "en loge" in the long halls up there up under the roof of one of the group of fine old buildings down near the River Seine. These "loges" were little cubby holes--little booths, each with a little window and a rough counter inside. You brought your own paper, drawing board, and your own T-square and triangle, and were issued the program then, which you'd never seen before. You had a day to make a preliminary sketch of what you proposed to study for that problem. If you changed it too much, later your drawing would be thrown out; you'd be "hors de concours," and you'd get no credit for it.

When you had made your preliminary sketch you kept a copy of it, and the school kept a copy of it. Then you would go back to your atelier and begin work on it--enlarging it and studying it and getting out the final drawings, finally rushing them down to the school (what was called a charette, because of the little cart that you dragged through the streets of Paris to get the drawings down just before the door closed at the school). If you had departed too much from that little preliminary sketch that you had made,

Perry: your drawing was simply thrown out and wasn't judged at all.

We always followed the same system in Berkeley, as most schools in the country do, but we weren't too strict about changes that were made. That was a real hardship there in Paris. You'd get a better idea after you had made the preliminary sketch, and you were either forced to do what you could with the poor sketch that you had made, or you could throw it out and accept the fact that the drawing would not be judged--but thrown out and you got no credit for it!

Riess: Whenever people talk about architectural schooldays they always talk about rushing in at the very last minute with the completed projects.

Perry: Yes, that's why it was called the charette.

Riess: What if you got it in a couple of days early? Would people have thought that a little peculiar--that somebody was done so soon?

Perry: They probably wouldn't have known what to do with it down at the school. [Laughter.] They were only factotums, you know, who received the drawings. They were just a sort of policemen; you simply shoved your drawing in and they took your name and that was that. You had to glue them (as well as your preliminary sketch) onto chassis and put gold tape around them before turning them in. At the school, they were put up in the big hall, and the jury, which was composed almost entirely of the patrons of the various ateliers--who were nearly all leading architects, would just simply walk around and say, "That's passed; that isn't passed," just like that--or, so we heard!

Riess: The gold tape around people's drawings didn't signify anything?

Perry: No, no. You didn't have to put it on, but everybody always tried to make his drawings look as pretty as possible, you know. [Laughter.] Some people used a different color, but that was considered a crude means of attracting attention!

Riess: In 1912, you also taught Theory of Architecture, a proseminar course that was a required course for the students.

Perry: Well, for all the courses in design there was supposed to be an accompanying lecture course, called the Theory of Architecture. The original ones that were so delightful were the ones Mr. Howard had up in his lovely house up on Ridge Road. There were only six of us, and Mrs. Howard would pour tea.

Riess: [Looking at book.] Here it shows what the graduate courses were. And then these are the courses in other departments. Were they required? "Strength of Materials"...

Perry: No, I don't think these were required then, and these were courses that were given in engineering here and were recommended, but not required. There was no degree in architecture.

Riess: "Graphostatics!"

Perry: "Graphostatics," "Sanitary Plumbing"...I remember these old names, yes. Derleth gave this "Framed Structures." As I remember, to graduate in architecture, you had to finish these courses--I mean the courses in here [referring to book]--which were mainly design, plus the theory course, and so forth. I, for instance, got a thing called Natural Science--N.S.

Riess: Oh, that was your degree?

Perry: The only other graduate degrees were A.B., N.S.--Natural Science--and B.S.--Bachelor of Science. We gave no degree of our own at all. You had to comply with the general University rules about the number of units you had to have, and that sort of thing. In architecture you were pretty well filled up with the required courses in architecture, which often ran up to, oh, six or eight units apiece. You usually took sixteen units a term at college.

For instance, if somebody had gotten into architecture back here [lower division] and gotten ahead of his class, so to speak, he might be taking these graduate courses up here. But if, on the other hand, he wasn't successful back in here [lower division], he still might get a University degree--not an architectural degree, but a general University degree--if he filled in with other courses outside of the department.

Riess: This course is interesting to me, a course in Office Practice.

Perry: Yes, I remember Mr. Hays gave that. (I didn't take it.)

Riess: Was that the practical business details?

Perry: I suppose so.

Riess: So we shouldn't assume too much from the description of the course?

Perry: No, you must remember that in this early day, this was not a comprehensive professional course in architectural practice--there was no

Perry: specific degree or professional license involved.

Riess: I've looked at many of the catalogues of the years when you were chairman. The faculty in 1934 was Mr. William Hays, Mr. Howard Moïse, you, Mr. Stafford Jory, Mr. E. Earle Cummings, Mr. Raymond Jeans, Mr. Torossian, and Mr. Michael Goodman. That stayed pretty much as a good core for quite a number of years.

Perry: Cummings, for instance, taught modelling--it was probably called sculpture--and he was there from the very beginning, when I was a student.

Riess: He was replaced in 1937 by Jacques Schnier.

Perry: Yes. Michael Goodman was about the youngest. He was after World War I. His family escaped from Russia; they'd fled across Russia--he was a Russian by birth--and got out from Harbin through China, and came to this country. He was quite young.

Riess: His training had been in Russia?

Perry: No, he was just a kid when he got here. But he had a fine background, went straight into architecture, and was always very good. He became a very good architect. Now he's emeritus, I guess. [Chuckles.] I think we all are, those of us who are left!

Among those who graduated in architecture here were Ray Jeans and Stafford Jory. Jory was very talented--a splendid designer and a very gifted draftsman and artist.

Riess: Then you're saying that these people came right out of the department, while William Hays...

Perry: Hays came from Pennsylvania while I was in Paris.

Riess: And Howard Moïse?

Perry: I got Howard Moïse. He had a Master's Degree from Harvard and was highly recommended by them. I met him in the East and brought him out here.

I became Dean in 1927 (Director, as it was then called) after being proposed by Mr. Howard, seconded by our faculty, and confirmed by President Campbell. Mr. Howard died suddenly in 1931. He was and had always been the unquestioned head of the School, always listened to with respect and held in real affection, both a delightful man and a richly endowed architect. I have always felt, as I told you before, that he was my good angel, and (as I look back on it)

Perry: he always helped me along. He proposed me for Dean in 1927 at a meeting of our little faculty group, all of whom were present but Mr. Hays, which was a great blow to Mr. Hays. [Laughter.]

I'd never given any thought to the subject at all. The School was still a small but happy little family, way out by itself on the north side of the campus. As the School grew--it got up to five or six hundred at one time, particularly after World War II, when the big Marshall Plan-G.I. rush took place, and there were a lot of men who came out of the service who had had a little architecture and wanted to go on with it. Many of them were, oh, in their thirties, or even older, and had had office experience, which was in many ways not a bad thing for the School.

Some of them had never been to an architectural school at all, but were pretty skillful draftsmen.

Riess: What did these men need of the School, then?

Perry: They wanted a chance to work in the courses in architectural design where they could originate a building in response to a given program, develop it, and study it as a whole--which they had had very little opportunity to do in a large and busy office if they didn't have a University course behind them and be told, "Well, now, here we've got this church: go ahead and see what you can turn out for it."

Riess: So you are saying that in those early years of your being Dean, at least until Howard died, your role was...?

Perry: I was just Dean in name. [Laughter.] Oh, I presided at meetings; at that time we had no hint that he would be suddenly taken from us.

Riess: Was he not old?

Perry: No. He was only twenty years older than I. He was born in 1864 and died in 1931, so he was sixty-seven.

XII JOHN GALEN HOWARD AND THE STADIUM CONTROVERSY

Riess: I keep skipping around, but that reminds me that I read somewhere that Howard was supervising architect of the campus.

Perry: Oh, yes.

Riess: I read that while he was off in the East they took that job away from him, and it was a great shock. Do you remember that incident? John Galen Howard went to Europe in 1927, and his son read in the paper that he had been fired as consulting architect on campus.

Perry: Well, 1927 was the time that I became Dean, and that may have been the interpretation that was put on it.

Riess: Around that time there was also the issue of the building of the stadium, and I think that might have been one of his problems. Wasn't he against that location of the stadium?

Perry: Yes, very much so, and very properly, I think. It's a romantic place to see, but the parking problem is impossible there. Well, that's another story.

I believe that what happened with the stadium was that the site was picked there--put over by some group in the University. It was a very nice old residential part of Berkeley; a number of people like the Blakes--distinguished old families--had built long ago and still lived right on the site. Piedmont Avenue, coming right up to it, was the finest residential street in Berkeley. It was a very handsome street, ending up more or less at the site where Strawberry Creek comes down below and runs through.

There was great indignation when they pounced on this area shaped somewhat like an arena at the mouth of the canyon, and said, "It's going to be here." As I remember it, Mr. Howard felt very badly. He wanted to put it way down somewhere away from the University where you could get plenty of flat land around it--like the Stanford Stadium.

Perry: On top of that, there was a character named George Buckingham, an English lad who was a friend of all of us in Berkeley. He married Helena Howells, whose father was a well-known engineer. Stanford wanted to have a big outdoor stadium, but they had no money. Then a chap named Carpenter, a young engineer, came up with a brilliant idea. They had plenty of room, so he made some drawings and sold the idea to Stanford. The Stanford Stadium was made by digging out a great depression in the ground and piling the earth from it up around the rim; so you finally got a full-sized stadium, with part of it below prevailing ground level and the rest of it built up with the earth that came out of the depression. Of course, you had to have a lot of concrete and everything too.

Well, that made a great sensation, and because of it he was picked by this group that was running the Berkeley stadium affair and was named, with Mr. Howard and this son-in-law of Howells (who I think was on the Regents), as one of the architects of the new Memorial Stadium.

Mr. Howard had the entire responsibility of designing the thing--of doing the architecture--which neither one of the other two would be capable of doing. They quickly set up an office; it had to be quite a large office, because there was a big rush to get it ready by the next Big Game. [Laughter.] The City of Berkeley had to condemn the land, and those people had to pack up and leave. The Blakes went down to Richmond, and the others went elsewhere to find new homes. It was fantastic.

Mr. Howard, disapproving of the whole idea, did, everything considered, a wonderful job. [Laughter.] It's a good-looking wall, I think, even if the whole of East Berkeley becomes a parking lot on the Big Game days!

In the meantime, other architects had been doing work on the campus. Bowles Hall, for instance, was built before then, right on the earthquake fault, by George Kelham, who also did the Life Sciences Building, and, of course, was a good architect. He had been brought out to San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire to build the new Palace Hotel on Market Street for Trowbridge and Livingston of New York, who got the job, and Kelham was one of the important men in their office who later settled out here. He became the Supervising Architect. He did the Men's Gymnasium.

Mr. Howard was anxious to retire at that time, and did little other work after that before he died.

Riess: You said that you brought Howard Moise out from Harvard. In those early days did you have any kind of faculty recruiting method?

Perry: Well, it was the usual haphazard method that most of the departments in the University employed. They had their own faculty groups, which we, for instance, always consulted when an addition to their number was under consideration, and there were often outside influences that came in to put pressure on them. But I think most of the schools and departments in the University did their own recruiting. We would consider a lot of different people.

I wrote a pile of letters when we were told we could have another upper level man. I usually went back East and met a lot of them. I met Howard Moïse, who was highly recommended by the Dean of the Harvard School at that time. Eventually I settled on him back there. He was a good man, but he was an unusual character! Others came up from our own graduate course and were taken on as instructors and went on from there--Jeans and Jory, both outstanding men.

Riess: Torossian?

Perry: He was an Armenian. He was first taken on to teach the important preliminary courses in Descriptive Geometry, and Shades and Shadows. He taught them for years, and did it very well. He published a book on them.

XIII HISTORY, AND STYLES

Riess: Hays continued the lectures on the History of Architecture?

Perry: Hays inherited the job from Mr. Howard. Then, when he got tired of giving it, we broke it up into three consecutive courses. Stafford Jory gave the classic (the Greek and Roman) architecture; Howard Moïse, who had been in Craft, Goodhue, and Ferguson's office in the East, (they were the leading "medieval" architects at that time), took over the Middle Ages (Romanesque and Gothic); and I gave the last part of it, the Renaissance, leading up to what was then quaintly called "modern!" But we never pretended to offer a course in modern architecture! [Laughter.]

Riess: What did you do about Sullivan and Richardson--were they considered modern? Would you have covered them?

Perry: Only briefly. Richardson was a Romanesque revivalist, of course. Sullivan and his group in Chicago had been successful men before they developed what were then considered very radical "modern" designs. Sullivan, for instance, and most of the better men back there where it started, in the middle west, like Frank Lloyd Wright later on, had a sound background, knew how to draw and had some familiarity with the old architectures from which they emerged with this new approach to design.

Riess: But they weren't really a part of a history survey course yet?

Perry: No, not in my day. The "modern" architecture consisted of various ideas based on the work of certain individuals. There was nothing that could be compared to, for example, the Renaissance in France and the Renaissance in Italy and so forth. It hadn't gelled at all!

Riess: The Bauhaus movement?

Perry: Well, that was something else again; it could perhaps be said to be an attempt to make a "style" out of modern means of construction. But if you started to give a course on the Bauhaus, you'd be faced with a collection of things that were different from anything else, and different from each other with little or no aesthetic value. There wasn't any solidarity or consensus of opinion among these men as to what really constituted a new "style" or a new approach.

And I think we must always remember the fact that most construction methods had completely changed between the last historic architectural period and our own time. When you look at the new buildings going up now in San Francisco, they're all utterly different. Everybody is looking for a new solution to these sudden asparagus growths shooting up, around the bones of highly developed (and often beautiful) engineering inside. How are you going to clothe this engineering, with due regard for the building's use, and, hopefully, with the qualities of scale, interest, and appeal of a fine old "style?"

Riess: The students probably got a chance to pore through magazines to look at the contemporary work?

Perry: Oh, yes indeed. We have always had a very broad approach to the whole thing. Mr. Howard wasn't an advocate for any "style" or anything of that sort; he was a scholar and the first thing he did, when he undertook to give his first course at the University, was, as I said, to ask Mrs. Hearst to give five or ten thousand dollars for the little architectural library. There was little like that out here before.

Riess: For myself, I'm sort of curious about the buzz of excitement about a new building that would be published--that might have come out of Chicago. What would the students of Berkeley do about that? Would they say to their professors, "Look at this!"

Perry: Oh, they might even imitate it! But we had no objection to that. It became a part of the problem. We hardly ever gave anything out to design in a certain style, except perhaps in a history course. In the "program," the document which was given to the students at the opening of a problem, there was nothing to indicate what it was going to look like. If it was a church, there was nothing to indicate that it must be like the Notre Dame de Paris, or St. Mark's in Venice, or St. John the Divine in New York. But if it were something like a church you naturally might be led into a rich field of design with profit to your own design ability--"Well, I was thinking of doing something Romanesque; or I might even venture to try something in Gothic!"

Perry: But with us most of the time there was no restriction in announcing a new problem as to what kind of architecture it had to be. The program dealt only with what the building was to be used for and a list of the requirements: it has to have this or it has to have that--but with no mention of "style" at all. If the student wanted to think in terms of "style," why, he was quite welcome to do so.

Riess: The only problem was if he decided to change style in mid stream. Then he was not welcome to do that?

Perry: [Laughter.] Well, with us that would be judged on its merits.

Riess: In that preliminary sketch that you talked about, wouldn't the style start showing through instantly?

Perry: The sketch was small, and it was really nothing but just what we call a "scheme," on a sheet the size of letter paper.

Riess: Would it be a frontal elevation, or would it be a floor plan?

Perry: Usually both. There would be one elevation, or even a little perspective, showing the general mass of the building, based on the plan, and, of course, there was a sketch of the plan. This is the usual way of launching a given problem in design in schools.

There was never any intent to teach Gothic architecture or Roman architecture, unless the student elected to use it in his solution of the problem. That was taken care of in the history courses, which always had drawing courses which accompanied them. Many of the fellows did beautiful little drawings of buildings from the period which they were following in the lecture course.

Riess: That's where you proved your ability to imitate a design in a certain style?

Perry: Well, the drawings were an important part of the history courses, and were required for architecture students. The lecture courses were open to all. [And--please! You don't "imitate" a style--you "design" in a style. A style is a language. You don't "imitate" a language; you use it!--Added later by Mr. Perry in editing.]

XIV THE ARK, 1903 to 1954

Riess: How did you choose your students?

Perry: Well, after twenty years, I'm pretty rusty on the actual requirements, then or now. But generally speaking, students intending to enter the School of Architecture should have spent their first two college years in preparation for it in addition to their general University requirements. The School really was considered as starting with the junior year, when students entered the "Ark" (as it was called)--the Architecture Building--and practically lived there. Up to that time they had been doing their physics and math (through calculus), taking their preliminary engineering courses, and various other courses in preparation for the work in Architectural Design ahead.

Riess: When you say that they practically lived in the Architecture Building, they did, didn't they?

Perry: Well, everybody had his own desk for the duration of a design course and kept his drawing equipment there. We were sort of apart, you know, off on the north edge of the campus. We were like one big family over there and came and went as we pleased--way into the night if there was a "charette" at the end of a design problem.

Riess: Were you a fairly Bohemian crowd?

Perry: Oh, I would say so, yes. We used to have some great parties over there, you know, when everybody came in costume. These were always held in the Ark and out into the court on a warm night. I remember one occasion long ago, when Mr. Howard came as Cardinal Richelieu and was magnificent in his long red robe and cap.

The building was enlarged very considerably when the crowd began to get larger [1908, 1912, 1936, 1952]. Originally, it was only the one little building down in the west front [1906], and the whole

Perry: School of Architecture was in the single room at the north end. The south end was Mr. Howard's campus office. In the middle between them was the little library, about the size of this room.

Riess: You said the crowd began to get larger. First it got larger after World War I?

Perry: It began to grow long before that.

When I came back from Paris in 1911, I think there must have been a hundred or a hundred and fifty in the School. There had always been yearly appropriations for books and magazines, and the library grew steadily, till one day, all of a sudden, they came over from the President's Office and said, "You've got a lot of valuable books here. This is a frame building; we're very sorry, but we'll have to take them over and put them in a fireproof building." So they carted them all off and put them way across the campus in one of the permanent buildings. Of course, after that, nobody from the Ark ever went near them!

So several of us got together--Walter Steilberg did all the engineering--and we designed the little concrete building that was far enough from the old frame building so it wouldn't be burned if the old building were. Walter Steilberg and Stafford Jory made and contributed all the drawings for it [1934] and it was built for \$15,000. Only then they let us have our library back. The new library was connected by a glazed corridor with the old building and we got a lovely court in the middle where we used to have delightful meetings in the open air. I hope that little building is still there!

Through the years, the Ark had grown steadily on the hill and, clear up at the upper end of it, was the Exhibition Hall [1912], which was solely for judging and exhibiting the student work in design as well as the watercolor, pen and ink work, and the like. As the various classes completed their problems and handed them in, Mr. Hurd, our faithful handyman, mounted them on the chassis and put the gold tape around them. These then were placed along the wall all the way around this Exhibition Hall. The judgments were always on Monday nights; the jury was the whole faculty, and often I didn't get home until two o'clock in the morning! We were really meticulous about it. There might be fifty drawings, which had been put up at random on the wall, on which there was a trough in which they could be stood and moved about. We'd all look over the whole line for a while, then somebody would pick one out and venture to say, "This one is pretty good, let's move it up a little." This process naturally took some time, but eventually

Perry: ended up in what everybody considered the proper order.

Riess: It would be awful to be the last one, at the bottom.

Perry: Oh, yes indeed! They took it very seriously. I have gone into all this detail because we always felt strongly that, in design at least, actual comparison of solutions to a common problem was the best way to teach.

Well, I left there when I was seventy, in 1954, after forty-three years on the faculty, and twenty-five years as Dean. When it came to finding a new Dean, our good friend, President Sproul, appointed a very good committee, largely of members of our staff, and Baldwin Woods, who was then the College of Engineering chairman.

The task of this committee was to consider all those who had been approached or had put themselves forward for the job of head of the School and to recommend their choice to the President. Among these, one of the most active was William Wurster, who had been serving as head of the Architecture Department at MIT, and he was the outstanding choice in the opinion of the committee that President Sproul had invited to suggest the new head of our School, which voted almost unanimously for Mr. Wurster.

That was in 1952, and he came right out. He did not want to do any teaching, but took over the old Ark completely and had very definite ideas about what he wanted to do. Principally, he didn't want Architecture to be by itself; he wanted to set up what became the College of Environmental Design, including all design having anything to do with buildings and their environment.

Of course, that immediately resulted in the big new building to provide space and proper equipment to handle these different departments of the College of Environmental Design--of which I know very little. What was left of our old faculty, of course, was absorbed in the new college, and the dear old "Ark" was gone forever.

Riess: Was there a sort of internal push anyway to expand architecture into this area? Do you think that was the natural thing for the time?

Do you think the students were looking for this?

Perry: Oh, of course, but then I'm just an old-fashioned architect, you know, and I always thought that architecture was the king of all the arts. [Laughter.] I've never been quite happy with the idea that we became a mere department in some imaginary thing called "environmental design," whatever that is. Architecture has had a tremendous

Perry: past, you know, and can lay claim to many distinguished names down through the ages. I like to think of ourselves as descendents in some small measure of those architects and what they stood for.

[End of taped interview.]

A few additional questions sent to Mr. Perry for his comments:

Question #1

Riess: Mr. Hays in his manuscript said that Mr. Howard was not a good lecturer because his language was too fancy.* What do you think of that? Did he talk "over" his students?

Perry: All good lecturers must talk "over" some of their hearers, if only for the sake of those who understand them.

Question #2

Riess: Mr. Wurster says that the fact that Maybeck was never employed by the University (I guess he means in the Architecture School) will always be "a black mark against us." I think it would be useful to have your comments on that, Mr. Perry.**

Perry: As I remember, one semester when he was away, Mr. Howard had invited several of the leading architects here to each one give one large problem to his graduate class in design. One of them was Maybeck. On the whole, while it was interesting, it was not a success and never repeated: most of the architects were bored, unwilling to seriously consider the students' efforts, and anxious to get the "five o'clock train back to town." After all, one has to learn to teach!

Question #3

Riess: As you look back, Mr. Perry, what work that you have done--teaching? designing? family? administration? none of these? hobbies?--has seemed the most rewarding for you?

Perry: Oh, dear! Well, let's say two--Teaching and Practice. I was most fortunate to be able to do both for all my active life, and they were mutually complementary and endlessly profitable to one another--(and this in no way reflects upon my family life!)

*William Charles Hays, Order, Taste, and Grace in Architecture, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1968.

**William Wilson Wurster, College of Environmental Design, U.C., Campus Planning, and Architectural Practice, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1964.

Question #4

Riess: As Dean, or in those many years of administering the School of Architecture, were efforts made, internal or external, to involve more local, or nationally renowned, practicing architects, in teaching students, or working with students for some period? Was it you who brought Eric Mendelssohn to lecture one year?

Perry: See Question #2. Yes, I brought Mendelssohn and he was a decided exception to the latter (#2), but he was a refugee, newly come from Nazi Germany, and did not lecture, but led the class in graduate design brilliantly through a series of great problems with great success. He began to establish a good practice, but died soon after.

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WALTER STEILBERG, ARCHITECT: THE MAN, HIS TIMES, HIS WORK

by Helena Steilberg Lawton

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I INTRODUCTION

One of the last times I was with Walter Steilberg, my father, a lovely and memorable incident occurred--one which sums up, with symbolic grace, the whole man. We were setting out, he and I, on an errand, on foot as he always preferred to go. He was done up in his usual garb: grey slacks and a muted blue pullover picking up the still-vivid azure of his eyes, kind but knowingly shrewd, above ruddy cheeks. On a full snowy pate (matched with a flourishing ample white beard) he had perched, in the arrogantly incorrect style he preferred, a béret basque. This headgear, sitting like an overly puffed-up brioche, became an essential element in WTS'* silhouette during his later years, as the familiar figure (a bit stooped, but sinewy) climbed up and down Berkeley's hills at a vigorous clip.

As we walked from his house at 1 Orchard Lane, down its patterned brick pathway, he stopped suddenly and picked up a dried magnolia leaf which had just fallen by our feet.

"Look," he said, in a sort of awe, "just look at that color, that beautiful warm bronze." And then, holding it up to the gentle, late-autumn sun, "Look at the structure: the veins, the way they support and nourish the leaf, the way they work and the pattern they make. And that color..."

A summation in a magnolia leaf. For WTS had two careers in his lifetime: first in residential design, in which he was both brilliantly original and successful, even fashionable, during the 1920's; second, after the Depression of the 1930's, in structure, as an architectural engineer, an "architect's architect," internationally honored in his profession.** In each field he found

*Walter Steilberg usually signed even the most intimate letters with his initials, so that is the manner in which I shall refer to him in this unavoidably rather intimate chronicle.

**The change of field will be explained later.

delight, whether he was designing a house for friends to live in with joy and comfort, or whether he was juggling the mathematical predictables and the vagaries of steel and concrete in a challenging structure. To WTS, both the aesthetic and the pragmatic had faces of equal and irresistible beauty.

Architect Robert Canfield, who had worked with WTS on UC campus projects, said to me recently, "He was a unique architect, in that he combined all that scientific and mathematical precision with a deep aesthetic understanding, an architectural philosophy--and all that highly original creative ability."

In writing this memoir, I have attempted to separate the volume into three separate subjects: the man, his times, and his work. But since the fabric of his life has personality, era, and achievement so tightly interwoven, I hope the reader will forgive the inevitable overlaps and redundancies.*

*I beg the reader's tolerance on still another score: it has been necessary to write the chapter in bits and pieces, in fits and starts, due to my own heavy job commitments. So if the pudding I serve up is lumpy here, underdone there, perhaps the plums it contains can be fished out, savored, and found to be nourishing. - H.L.

II PERSONAL

WTS, the Man

Although both the interviews and the later parts of this chapter reveal sides of WTS's character by precept and by implication both, I should like to first round out his persona where it is either hinted at or omitted in the transcriptions.

His personal impact was one of intense vitality, both physical and intellectual, and also one of warmth. Although he claimed to scorn "small talk," his interest in and curiosity about anyone to whom he was introduced was immediate. He would draw out the new acquaintance instantly, find a common ground, and acquire a devoted friend for life. Although his brilliance and specialization is known in his profession and is becoming again recognized generally outside of his own field, he was always deeply excited by what was discussed, or discovered, or written, or pondered in other fields. Young people were always drawn to him because he listened, and he listened to children also. Evelyn Ratcliff speaks of this in one of the interviews, and as the tapes show, he listened, but he also could talk. He was a witty and graceful raconteur.

As the letters and his lecture about the Spanish monastery project show, his written style was quite different from his style as a raconteur, however. In his telling of a story there was an immediacy, a robust vividness, and a vernacular ambience; whereas, due to the classical education that even San Diego gave in the early 1900s, his written style was discursive, polished, Gladstonian, fluent, and with a rather British wit, as contrasted with the very American humor of his spoken story-telling.

His photographs do him an injustice of sorts because, in the 19th century tradition of presenting a solemn mien to the lens, WTS inevitably pulled his long Scandinavian face down even longer, setting his mouth in an expression suitable for funerals. Off-camera, laughter and amusement always hid in his eyes and mouth,

along with an indomitable joie de vivre. He considered himself on the homely side, when in fact both friends and strangers found him handsome, and his strongly-hewn good looks increased with the years.

As the first interviews show, he belonged to a generation in which ability coupled with industry led to success. If you were both gifted and hard-working, good fortune would beam on you: she would pour work into your hands (never idle, of course) work which was a challenge, a delight, and financially profitable. Emerson's "mousetrap" theory still worked, for him; and he pursued two successful careers, one after the other.

A corollary to the work ethic given him by his parents and the age in which he grew up was early rising as an absolute essential to success. WTS was blessed with a marvelous sleep requirement: never, until his late eighties, did he need more than six hours of sleep a night. He worked or read until midnight, was up at 6 a.m., and like so many of his generation, he equated virtue as well as success in life with early rising. He also equated early rising with good health, stating often that "An animal that does not get up when it is light is not a healthy animal!" He and I used to have friendly arguments about this and I would bring in the owl and the cat, marshalling points to my side--to little avail, however, in altering his 19th century conviction.

During the last years of his life, every morning he rose early as usual, fixed himself a cheese sandwich on dark rye, and walked with his dogs in the hills. Then, high above the town he sat, ate his sandwich for breakfast, and watched Berkeley come awake.

Animal Friends

Both animals and the rich complexities of the natural world were a constant source of delight to him. He was never without at least one dog, assorted cats, and little wild creatures whom he loved to tame. To the end of his life, thoroughly spoiled and demanding squirrels were lavishly fed, as were flocks of birds of all feathers.

At the Carmel cottage, which he and his wife Elizabeth visited more and more as they grew older, he trained bluejays, those raucous feathered pirates, to come and perch on his hand, eat peanuts, and even to be briefly stroked. He said to me in Carmel once, "I know you think of them only as handsome predators with a miserable squawk, but you haven't heard their song. It's their private language, used

among themselves--come by this thicket and listen." He was right: it was another language, a gently melodious murmur.

Timmie (named for Marshal Timoshenko), his great shaggy Persian cat, and Chum, a rather dour one-man black Labrador, were his closest companions on Kodiak, and he brought them back from Alaska when he returned--the three riding in style with a Navy transport plane all to themselves.

It is interesting that in his application to the U.S. Navy for active duty, made in 1918, he cites as useful experience Hunting (small game) 1896-1904; and indeed, he had been considered the family sharpshooter in those long-passed youthful days in San Diego. But it was with a jolt that I read it, coming across that yellowed application form: the boy who could wing a wild pigeon in its erratic flight suddenly emerged in the man who wished to do battle against Germany. During my lifetime's memories of him, however, I knew only kindness and affection--and a bit of animism--in his feeling toward furry and feathered creatures. To him, they were quite simply people.

WTS's love of nature manifested itself in another sense: for him, walking on the hills, in the woods, by the sea were mystic experiences; coming from a family of atheists, free-thinkers, and anticlericalists (he sometimes referred to clerical declamation as "the ministerial bleat"), nothing whatever could have induced him into a church of a Sunday morning--save a look at its architecture, of course. He often said, "Taking a walk on the hills Sunday morning and becoming a part of that wonderful natural world--that's my way of going to church."

WTS, the Non-Driver

There has been much speculation as to why WTS did not drive a car. There were two reasons, both truly in harmony with the whole man. When people asked him why he didn't drive, his customary quip was, "Well, the only time I ever drove a car I drove it right into the Pacific Ocean." He had learned to drive in Santa Barbara, living and working there in Russel Ray's office around 1912--and in his second marriage (in 1921) to Elizabeth, while she drove with dash and often reckless bravado, he let her always take the wheel, although he kept a constant personal eye on the mechanical condition of their cars.

He was not afraid of automobiles, nor even of driving, himself. But--he knew himself very well as a man who, once bewitched, enthralled, and captivated by a problem in design or a challenge in engineering, became too abstracted to put anything else into his head. Famously absent-minded when he was preoccupied with his work, he knew perfectly well that he was often, as his good friend Albert Elkus (the great pianist-composer who built UC's Music Department into national brilliance) put it to me once, "a man possessed of an idea." Possessed of an idea one day in Santa Barbara, he had absent-mindedly piloted a "tin Lizzie" a few feet off a beachside road onto the sand. (Our family abounds in stories about WTS's absent-mindedness while preoccupied with his work; one or two will inevitably insinuate themselves into this chronicle.)

My personal feeling about this is that he was acting in a highly practical manner; creative man should often stay from behind the wheel. Albert Elkus himself for whom I had much love (he had also been one of my music professors) was something of a nightmare to drive with: turning a corner nearly always involved going up on the curb (and scattering astonished pedestrians). My late husband Edward Lawton, another magnificent musician (for 29 years professor of music at UC and director of the University Chorus, Repertory Chorus, and a composer as well), was another nightmare to drive with--in a different style. Ed drove at roughly ten miles per hour, smack down the center of a heavily trafficked street, with both hands off the wheel--conducting.

But WTS's absent-mindedness was not his only reason for not driving: long years before the word "ecology" became a kindergarten commonplace, he was railing against commuters to San Francisco driving across the bridges, one person per car. He deplored the consequent waste of natural resources, the fouling of the air; he felt that commuters should pool or that they should take mass transport--and the latter was his personal preference. As soon as the San Francisco Bay Bridge was opened in 1936, he proposed to the bridge authorities that tolls be scaled so that the more passengers riding in a car going through the toll gate, the lower the fee should be. "It just makes me wild," (his favorite term for total exasperation) "to see car after car--those damn big 'Belchfires'--crossing the bridges with only one person in them."

He again mounted his one-man campaign for down-scaling of tolls when the Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937, but to no avail. I am glad that at last, during his lifetime, there was at least a minimal fruition of his idea in today's toll system for well-filled commuter cars.

(A parenthesis: "Belchfire" was the term used by George Lichty, WTS's favorite cartoonist, when Lichty was skewering the automotive industry or its sales force.)

WTS: Work versus Scholarship

A recurrent question since his death is, "Why didn't WTS teach at the University?" (See page 151 of the interviews.) I do know of two specific times when he was offered teaching posts there; there may have been others. There were several reasons--all totally characteristic of him--that he did not join academia. For one, the freedom to accept commissions around the globe was precious to him. Other lands, other tongues (he claimed to be a poor linguist, but was in fact a very quick study with a new language), other customs, and even other areas in the U.S. with their then-decidedly different regional characters--the earth's variety delighted him.

Part of this was the ever-changing set of architectural or engineering challenges he faced on a new assignment and a great deal of it was his intense pleasure in working with everything from the unskilled laborers to the sophisticated craftsmen and architects of another country, another culture. And he loved debunking the mythologies of national personality.

For instance, the Polynesian workman with whom he was in constant, close contact on his Honolulu projects earned his instant, affectionate respect. "The missionaries and the traders thought the Hawaiians were stupid and lazy because they were kind and trusting," he'd say. And then, pulling out photographs (somehow he kept them so meticulously catalogued that any desired photo could be produced in a wink), "Look at those magnificent human beings: they're enormous, strong, hard-working--and what quick minds! It's always a joy to work with them."

Incidentally, he was a passionate enthusiast of flying and was a frequent passenger on the Matson Lines' first-ventured flights to Hawaii, piloted often by the writer Ernest Gann, who became his good friend. There were spectacular crises in flight sometimes, in those early days of transoceanic air travel, and WTS thoroughly enjoyed the adventure at its height and "the dangers he had passed" in his subsequent telling of it. Some of the early Pacific hair-raisers were used later as material for fiction, when Gann had turned to writing. WTS had pasted inside the front board in his copies of Gann's books, his notes on that particular air adventure, with sometimes

even a photograph--such as one of a devastatingly stopped propeller smack in mid-Pacific. Even at a time of life and death, the Leica camera was ever at the ready.

A great part of his joyful experience in skillfully, and with complete success, dismantling--every Gothic arch, voussoir by voussoir--the Spanish monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila, the stones labeled, the reconstruction drawings both meticulous and beautiful, so that it could be reassembled after its transportation to California, was his pleasure in the Spanish workmen. "Poor devils--they live in such poverty, rags bound around their feet for shoes, and they scratch for every crust of bread, but they have an indomitable pride. The dignity, the bearing. You can only address them with respect and courtesy."

It was not only overseas that WTS had a close rapport with workmen. Elsewhere in the interviews he refers to himself as a medieval architect in spirit: a craftsman working with other craftsmen. But in actual operation this spiritual guild had, in truth, its hierarchy. For he did insist on the best men in the building trades as workmen. He addressed them with meticulous democracy (even though he might have known them for thirty years) as "Mr. Blank," but he was a tiger on the job, and things were done as he ordered them; there was a set to his jaw that was a silent admonition: "Do it right." If work was bungled, it must be torn out and done again. The reason that only respect and never resentment came to him from workmen was that he always placed the building, the job itself, as the issue--never personalities.

To return to the question, "Why didn't he teach at the University?" a last paragraph or two may be pertinent. He loved to teach; he loved sharing his learning and expertise with young people. But his pleasure in it lasted only as long as the feed-back, the response, was at the rapid ping-pong rally tempo at which his own mind worked. Brilliant students, of which he had for the most part an exceptional crew in his engineering classes on Kodiak during World War II, were a delight to him. With the slower ones, his patience would quickly give out, and draftsmen who trained under him in San Francisco and Berkeley went through the same experience.

A loving and tenderly domesticated pussycat of a husband and father during my childhood, he would roar at me like an exasperated lion at my woefully inadequate grasp of arithmetic and mathematics. And of course, the louder he roared, the larger grew my terror of figures and the more unintelligible they seemed. It is the only area in which I can remember being a little afraid of him or temporarily feeling less than cherished by my father...so I do understand how a few of his engineering students or draftsmen must have felt.

WTS had a great love of scholarship and he pursued it, in every field which interested him, with a scholarly thoroughness, keeping well-catalogued articles on everything from the DNA breakthrough to the Free Speech movement at UC Berkeley. But his affection and respect for scholarship were in the degree to which formal learning had pragmatic value. He could quote Vitruvius or Vasari in Latin or Italian, for example, with perfect accuracy--but as their wise words applied directly to design and structure in ancient Rome, Renaissance Florence, and particularly to the San Francisco Bay area today. Scholarship, per se, was to him a pleasant pastime, but it was only truly important when it was significantly presented and when it served action.

An anecdote he told about a now long-deceased UC dean, for whom he had designed a house in the '20s, is illustrative. One day as WTS was riding the commuter train (the old, noisily rattling, but efficient, red "S.P," which connected with the also long-gone but reposeful ferry boat to San Francisco), he overheard a conversation between two students in Professor X's department. "What's Professor X like as a teacher? How are his lectures?" one student asked. The other student answered, "His lectures? They're owl manure, pure unsifted owl manure."

Although his own research in his field was meticulous, he cocked a skeptical eyebrow at scholarly pomposity: one of his papers, to be published by a technical magazine, was submitted with the following austere title:

*STUDY OF THE CRACKING OF CONCRETE WALLS:
THE CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL STRESSES IN THE
SEISMIC DESIGN OF CONCRETE BUILDINGS*

As the periodical's editor had requested a photograph of the author, WTS pasted underneath the credit line a portrait of himself, with the following tongue-in-cheek identification:

Portrait of the Author, aetatis suae IV

(See illustration section for a copy of this portrait.)

And there he was--a solemn, overly bundled-up little Victorian pre-schooler. Needless to say, scholasticism does not permit this kind of blague--but he had fun making an editor nervous.

The Impatient Patient

Never impressed by the idea of built-in status, he gave the medical profession some rather healthy jolts during his few illnesses. Around ten years ago he was a patient at Alta Bates Hospital because of a staphylococcus infection in one knee. Resentful at having to obey orders from the nurses (needless to say, these directives were for his own good), he took a stand.

"They're perfectly nice girls, those nurses," he said to me, "but, boy, do they shove me around! So I've decided that I'm going to do the one thing I can be independent about. Every day they say to me, 'Mr. Steilberg, wouldn't you like to shave now?' and I just say, 'No, thanks.'"

"You see," he explained with a wide grin, passing a hand over his stubbled, scruffy chin, "I'm growing a beard. But I'm not going to tell 'em. It just drives them wild," he added happily. (The beard grew into a beautiful white brush, which he kept, neatly groomed, the rest of his life.)

During that same illness, he was under the care of a prestigious local orthopedist who later became a good friend (and who was attendant on him at his death), but who at that time was most hectically overloaded with patients. As WTS was doing well in his convalescence, the orthopedist routinely poked his head in his iconoclastic patient's hospital room every morning, asked him how he felt, and vanished, almost before WTS could answer. WTS had growled to me about this, and presently he pounced. One morning the doctor stuck his head in the door, as usual, and was about to disappear when WTS bellowed at him, "Now just one minute, young man! You come in here and sit down, because there's something I need to ask you about." The "young man"--then around 50--astounded, entered and perched on a chair.

"Do you see this cast?" he inquired indignantly. "They tell me the cast is supposed to hold my knee firmly in one position. But it seems to me that if I can put my whole hand inside the cast and pat my knee, it's not exactly being held in a firm position."

The cast was replaced that day. As for the knee, the infection had virtually destroyed the patella, leaving him with a stiff leg. But through his characteristic stubborn determination, he exercised constantly and stumped up and down the hills, regaining, in two or three years, complete mobility of the joint and delightedly giving the lie to the medical prognosis, when he left the hospital, that he would have to walk with a cane and a limp for the rest of his life.

WTS and Architectural Compromise

In the transcripts of the interviews there are speculations made as to WTS's possible unwillingness to compromise his architectural concept in order to accommodate the client's wishes. It is true that there were occasional very minor pulls and hauls between him and a client, but this was rarely on the issue of design proper--as I remember, it related to matters of expense, such as ample electric outlets (a most realistic basis), a half-bath on the main floor, or leaded glass--all of which would cost a bit more but would add to the comfort and beauty of a house and contribute to its enjoyment--by the then and future owners over the years. If the client's purse could not bear the brunt, he understood, of course (he had not worked his way through UC for nothing), but if it was a matter of what seemed a parsimoniously short-sighted economy, he grumbled a bit at the dinner table at home..."They just can't seem to realize how much they're going to miss having a bathroom for their guests on the main floor," I remember his saying, with a sigh. The cost for his services was never a disputed item in his invoices--that fell generally below the accepted percentage for the architect in the '20s, I find, in going over antique (literally!) billings from his office.

By contrast, consider Bernard Maybeck. In the 1920s Maybeck, WTS's elder but friendly rival, designing for the same Bay Area "crowd," still insisted on his total autocracy in design. A famous anecdote about Maybeck--and WTS loved this one--concerned a Berkeley musician whose amorous inclinations, a few years after his marriage, slanted very definitely toward those of his own sex. (The marriage was preserved, though, in a rather obvious armed truce...I cannot think why, as in that era "respectability" in intellectual and artistic circles in Berkeley and San Francisco embraced all manner of legally unsanctioned alliances, in the full spectrum of sexual preferences...as now.)

But Maybeck was a charmingly innocent man: he did not pick up the prickly ambience of this family, which consisted then of the musician, his wife, and their grown daughter. As was his custom, Maybeck called on the "family," chatted with them, and returned a week or so later with a plan, pronouncing pontifically, "Mr. C., I see you and your wife and your daughter all in one large room."

"Mr. Maybeck," shrilled the musician, "you won't do. You simply won't do!"

Probably the most dramatic series of compromises WTS endured was at the hands of William Randolph Hearst during the construction of San Simeon; a few of the client's astonishing caprices are described in the interviews.

But WTS was ever disinclined to speak ill of a client--this was a strong point of ethics with him--so that although he railed against the Hearst press empire and its cruelly destructive manipulation, again and again, of public opinion against Chinese and Japanese Americans (the "Yellow Peril"), somehow he was able to set aside his strong critical opinions about this side of Hearst's power drive and respect his imperious client's intellect and his ability to visualize an architectural plan and translate it into three dimensions. "Hearst was the only layman I ever met who could really read a plan," he used to say.

I know of only one residence of his own design in which WTS had to make massive compromises with his own style. An elderly couple from New England, for many years treasured family friends, asked him in the late '20s to design a new house for them in the traditional New England colonial manner--and it was to be positioned on a 45-degree (or steeper) lot. With love and despair, WTS agreed. (Julia Morgan would not have turned a hair; a stone's throw from my house, on a level site, is a simon-pure colonial from her drawing board.) In its realization, WTS's single "colonial" was ingeniously worked out. The first story, facing the street, was indeed reminiscent of Salem and Gloucester--fanlights, shutters, white paint with green trim. But the bedrooms were placed below on the down-slope, in the hilly California "upside-down house" mode he loved. However--he fidgeted a bit when acknowledging authorship and usually changed the subject, in haste, to the admirable qualities of that New England family.

WTS and Julia Morgan

The reader should be reminded that there is an inevitable imbalance, in the interviews, on the subject of Julia Morgan, since the original purpose of many of these talks had been, in fact, to gather source material about J.M.; numerous questions were posed--and answered--with that goal in mind.

I think it is important to open a window or two on my father's long association with Julia Morgan. There is a phrase which recurs maddeningly in present-day books on Bay Area architecture: WTS is defined as "long a draftsman in Julia Morgan's office." This

donkey's work appellation is completely untrue. When he started out in architecture upon graduation from college in 1910, he quickly became her chief draftsman, and he was immediately put to the pleasant task of doing a great deal of designing, including buildings which today are attributed totally to J.M. herself. She did, indeed, delegate a good deal of the design of buildings which today bear her name. Granted, this was the custom of the time; while now the name of a firm of architects is as long as that of a brokerage house (as it should be), in that day the name of the architect who had started the firm carried full credit.

The original design for one of Berkeley's most honored buildings, St. John's Presbyterian Church on College Avenue at Derby Street, for instance, was by WTS. It is completely typical of his early style in redwood. Within the family he admitted this, but publicly he followed the custom of 1910 and granted her credit; and he had been, after all, still an apprentice and yet to be certificated (he was, in 1911).

(A parenthesis: I think there is no mention in the interviews of WTS's detailing on UC campus buildings. As a draftsman for John Galen Howard while still an undergraduate, he did the neoclassic detailing on Wheeler Hall, the Library, and what was formerly called California Hall--Howard's designs in the old Beaux Arts tradition. He also detailed the gesso work on the ceiling of the dining room of the President's House while working for Howard.)

He worked as a member of Morgan's "team" off and on, later; due to World War I, this was sporadic, but when there (with his name on her door, by the way) his main task was supervising construction, at which he was superlative, and he supervised all six draftsmen. Once his own office was established in 1920, his relationship to her became that of structural consultant, as, for example, on the Berkeley City Club.

At San Simeon he was not only structural consultant but also a designer: the guest houses, simple, graceful, and devoid of the (in my opinion) tasteless excesses of the "Castle" proper, were totally his design (Hearst, uninterested, did not interfere)--but are persistently attributed to Morgan. Thaddeus Joy also, while in her office, with his name on her door too, designed as well as detailed and supervised for Morgan. Long after other architects were giving their partners their due credit, Morgan continued to assume full authorship--this partly explains the eclecticity of her work, of course.

J.M. was, however, indeed modest about her work in that she shunned personal glory, but those of us whose fathers were in her

office have long shared the feeling that part of her modesty was attributable to her having had an excellent group of men working with her, and she knew it. Had she sought glory for herself in terms of publicity, she would then (by the '30s) have had to share laurels openly with the "team." But her attitude reflects less her own power drive, I think, than her position in history: she was a woman, and indeed an extraordinary woman, battling in male territory against deep prejudice. She may prove to have been the only widely successful woman architect of our century, as today's woman architect faces the same fight and all too often finally retreats behind the walls of academia or into the obscurity of a big firm with major government or industrial contracts.

One should not forget, though, that she had two tremendous and unusual advantages: first, a wealthy patron, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who gave her an unparalleled start with commissions all across the country; and second, there was the "team"--for although she went on jobs supervising, herself, and was remarkably forceful about it, at the same time she kept in her office authoritative and decisive men who would do--and did--the greater part of the supervising, taking on some of the tougher customers in the building trades. (This is generally known among today's architects.) Although WTS, in his great personal loyalty to her, never fussed over the attribution of his designs to her, the fact remained that this tiny, wispy, head-to-foot grey little lady, who looked to my sister and me like a quietly terrifying maiden aunt, expressed a feminine monarchistic "L' État, c'est moi."

WTS wanted to form his own office and did so as soon as he could, once World War I was over; for he was a far more creatively imaginative designer than she, and I think he knew it. Later, he worked with her as structural engineer--but as a collaborator, not a subordinate. (And certainly not "long a draftsman.") His residential designs had wide public recognition and acclaim during the '20s; his expertise in structure was internationally acclaimed amongst the members of his own profession, after his change of field in the '30s.

In both his careers, he enjoyed recognition even though he disliked publicity in the promotional sense; publicity and credit due were two quite different concepts in his almost excessively ethical view.

III FAMILY

Family History

While reading the first chapters of the interviews with WTS, I was struck by something quite extraordinary which he had never spoken of in the family, at all. He was accustomed to scoff at genealogies, believing that the individual should stand on his own merits in his own time. Although he had freely admitted to learning a good bit of conversational German as a child--"because my parents spoke it whenever they didn't want me and my sister Alma to understand"--he had said little about the German heritage, and I had had the impression that his people had stopped no more than in passing from Sweden through Germany on their way to this country.

As his first daughter, I was given a Swedish name--Helena with an a, not the German Helene, pronounced somewhat similarly but terminated with an e. And discovering, among WTS's papers, his application for commission in the armed forces submitted in November, 1918, I find he wrote in the "knowledge of foreign languages" section of the form, a militant X in the boxes relative to German: poorly (conversation, reading, writing). A testimony of loyalty, then; in later wars we learned that one must know the enemy's language.

I know that he had a great-uncle on the Wrampelmeir side who was a red-bearded sea captain sailing out of Göteborg and to whom he was deeply devoted. WTS's tendency to minimize the German strain, however, ran through the family. His Uncle Theodore and his sons, WTS's first cousins, who had been Wrampelmeirs, changed their name to a flawlessly Anglo-Saxon monosyllable, Swift, during World War I. WTS, however, stubbornly clung to the family name and let the chips fall where they might. Many thousands of Americans at that time, of course, did change their names from German or Germanic-sounding ones into something more "British."

WTS's father, Wilhelm Steilberg--changed to William in America--had had grandparents living in Osnabrück, only a few chilly waves from Denmark; the Swedish family name had been Stahlberg. (Incidentally, both WTS and I were constantly taken for Swedish when in Europe, and I still am, now; Scandinavian total strangers frequently approach me, as they did him, and start an amiable conversation in Swedish...in spite of a couple of generations of Germany, the Swedish genes must have had great vitality and persistence. One of WTS's great-granddaughters, Biba Lawton, now 10, has the same experience abroad--and she does look snatched from a Bergman film.)

William, then Wilhelm Steilberg, left Germany out of principle when he was only 14 or 15. He was strongly anti-militarist, objecting to the forced conscription in operation at that time in Germany. And again, out of principle, he volunteered and fought in the Civil War in the United States on the Northern side, at the age of 16. He would not take up arms for militaristic expansionism, but he would and did for a cause in which he believed, although he became sickened at the strife between brother and brother in the Civil War.

A gentle person, his lifelong kindness etched into his face when I knew him, he ran an orange ranch that was anything but an efficient agribusiness. The livestock was virtually a zoo, and the orange grove was filled with Luther Burbank-like cross breedings and mutations. William's closest friend during WTS's childhood was the Black physician, Dr. William Burney, referred to later in this chronicle.

WTS's maternal grandfather knew Richard Wagner slightly and thoroughly disliked both his music and his personality. "A nasty-tempered little anti-Semite," was his opinion, quoted by my father.

There was a Jewish strain in the family far back, but having little interest in genealogical fractions I have forgotten where or when. I feel, as WTS did, honored that this is a part of the family heritage.

The link occurs somewhere in a branch of the family from Austria; there the name was transmuted to Rumpelmeyer, the same family which established the internationally elegant pâtisseries in Paris, London, and New York. One time in Europe, after World War II, WTS had tried to trace this down, but genealogical research is a pastime of leisure and infinite patience--neither of which WTS possessed in much measure--so that the exact linkages were never joined in a neat diagram.



Walter Steilberg, age 4.



Walter Steilberg at 45. Berkeley Board of Education campaign photograph.



Walter Steilberg, age 18, upon graduation from high school. San Diego, California.



WTS at 55.



Rowena Symonds, Walter Steilberg's first wife, ca. 1912. Mother of Helena.



Elizabeth Van Everen Ferguson, second wife of WTS. Mother of Rosalie.



Helena Steilberg Lawton, 1974



Rosalie Steilberg Dwyer

But both my father and stepmother were pleased at the many times the "berg" on the end of their name led to strangers' assuming that the family was entirely Jewish, as being Jewish in old Berkeley and old San Francisco carried great cultural cachet. It was the Jewish families who lovingly and lavishly and with great taste encouraged and patronized the arts. To the end of his days, WTS (and Elizabeth also) would say of a new acquaintance, in a most honoring tone of voice: "He comes from a very fine Jewish family, you know."

Wilhelm Steilberg's brother Heinrich, according to a letter of WTS's (1951) to a distant relative curious about the family history, had also got out of Germany, moving to England..."he shipped out on a British whaler, and in the course of years became an officer on an English passenger liner--changing his name to Harry Williams...he visited us in Southern California. Uncle Harry was quite a character, and I remember him quite clearly, probably because he was a grim-looking man in a dark blue suit with lots of gold braid and brass buttons--very impressive to a boy of four."

This letter also points out that the brothers' father "had participated in the unsuccessful revolt of Hanover against Prussian rule." (And were doubtless persona non grata as a result.) A third brother, Hermann, also came to the U.S. and served in the Union Army throughout the Civil War; as he, too, changed his name, all traces of him have been lost, to my knowledge.

At one time in the 1950s WTS came back from an assignment in Europe, and having observed Germany's phenomenal reconstruction following World War II, said: "So Americans are afraid of the Russians! It is not the Russkis we should be afraid of--it's the Germans!" And when he wanted to enlist in the U.S. Navy in 1940, it was to fight Hitler and the Nazi crimes against the Jewish people he honored. Einstein was nearly an idol to him and he considered him the greatest figure of the 20th century.

I think the reason that the early family ancestry is described in so much detail in the interviews is that at the time he was sorting his books, his papers, his drawings; he was making gifts to universities, and he was reviewing not just paper--he was reviewing his life. In all his sorting he had dug up musty documents, old family records which he had never thought very much about heretofore. And by then--sixty years after World War I and three decades after World War II--he could admit back into his memory the good things

which Germany had contributed to his childhood: his mother's singing in the Liederkrantz in Louisville and the musicality she gave him; his father's youthful courage in fighting for a cause; his inherited old world passion for perfection of craft; the work ethic which was close to being a religious devotion for him.

The Family, Up to Date

My sister Rosalie, WTS's daughter by his second marriage, married Ed V. Dwyer, marine biologist and for many years director of recreational water resources for the State of California; they raised their three children, Joanna, Jonathon, and Martha, in Sacramento. My family of four boys, David, Randal, Nicholas, and Roger, grew up in Berkeley, and their father was Edward Lawton, professor of music at UC Berkeley and director of the University Chorus.

Of WTS's immediate relatives, others surviving him are his nephew Otto Walter Habis-Reutinger (the family now has dropped the Habis)--the son of his sister Alma--and his family; his wife Joan (Castledine), who was my closest friend in college, and their three children, Martin, Christopher, and Anne.

WTS's great-grandchildren are Dorothea ("Biba") and Cordelia, David Lawton's daughters, Joanna Dwyer's daughter Julia Rose, and Jonathon Dwyer's son Roy and daughter Delia.

San Diego Youth

My earliest memories of WTS's stories of his youth in San Diego were those about April Fool's Day and Halloween: the pranks were heroic, and my sister Rosalie and I were enthralled. One, for instance, was short-sheeting his maiden aunt's bed (Aunt Lola Wrampelmeier, who lived with the Steilberg family) and adding the fillip of a prickly horned toad, caught in the nearby desert. (Rosalie and I were dreadfully envious: Berkeley had no horned toads.)

Another was the manner in which his senior class in highschool vented its adolescent energies. At one or two a.m., the male members of the graduating class dismantled the principal's buggy and reassembled it, complete with fully harnessed and indignantly

snorting horse, in the poor man's living room, where he discovered it upon rising the next morning. But since no one was expelled, the principal must have been faced with that form of Augean stable before; and I suspect that this particular prank was enacted all over the rural United States at the turn of the century, and that each senior class was convinced of its own brilliant originality.

WTS had a slightly crippled right hand, and this was due to a fall from a horse during his boyhood in San Diego. San Diego was still the Old West then, and WTS spent every spare moment on horseback, gun slung over his shoulder, his dog loping at his side. One day the horse suddenly took fright, shied and reared up, and the young rider was thrown; in order to break his fall onto the hard parched desert soil, he threw back his hands. He added, in the telling, "That's instinctive--trying to break a fall that way. But it's a lousy instinct for a featherless biped: the hands always get hurt."

His right hand did not heal properly. He showed me and my son Nick, placing it on the table, that he was unable to lay the hand completely flat and spread his fingers--they were always a bit bunched. Yet I never knew of the accident and I think he would never have told me or anyone else, but for a family episode, as he was immensely proud of his generally splendid physical condition and high vitality. (They were his only vanity.)

Nick had broken two fingers in his right hand, and both articulation and sensitivity were discouragingly slow in returning; Nick complained to his grandfather about it, fearful about his future. WTS broke a personal secret--one which he had successfully concealed all his life, even from his immediate family--in order to give a grandchild hope and encouragement. And an example--for he was not unaware of all four of my sons' and my sister's son's and two daughters' devoted admiration for him.

Skill as a Draftsman

This slight bunching of his fingers did not, however, interfere with his enormous skill as a draftsman: from childhood on it was fast, sure, and elegant, with that one quality common to all fine drawing: a line with aliveness. His elevations were both exact and vividly expressive of the character of the houses which they forecast. Even as he grew older and his freehand line became a little wiggly, it still went rapidly and surely through its course

on paper. Disturbed by remarks in one of the interviews which were derogatory about WTS's drawing, (p. 176), I talked with other architects who had worked with him over the years, and all were dumbfounded at such an opinion, defending WTS's skill, even in old age, with enthusiasm. Among them were Robert Canfield, Norman Jensen, Norma Willer, Michael Goodman, William Corlett, Germano Milono, and Sally Woodbridge--the last for whom he drew illustrative sketches during her interviews with him just before his death. His drawings, now in the University of California's architectural archive, are a spirited and eloquent testimony to his command of line.

The remark, "He couldn't see to draw" must have referred to a very short time in WTS's life when his eyes were adjusting to trifocal-lens glasses; and there may indeed have been episodes, during perhaps two or three weeks or more, when his pencil would be off the mark. I can only guess that after so many years--about twenty--the speaker (who had not worked for my father since the 1950s) had fixed in his mind that brief temporary handicap as a permanent condition--as people so often will do.

WTS's Handwriting

There are a couple of other points in the interviews which need to have light cast on them. WTS's handwriting, for one. It was indeed dreadful, but this was not because of an inability to direct his pen properly--witness the very sure roman lettering on his drawings. His writing was difficult to read simply because he wrote so rapidly, because there was so much that he wanted to jam into a letter in the brief amount of time at his disposal. (He called it, "my scrambled scrawl.")

His written style, as I pointed out elsewhere, was expansive, voluminous, rich with evocative detail, garnished with humor--and he was always in a hurry to get it all in, his thoughts rushing ahead of the speed of any human longhand. But--it was legible, once one became accustomed to the fact that it was basically a horizontal line, inflected above or below with shallow upward or downward wiggles and loops. This personal shorthand was quite understandable, once one got used to it, and his secretaries never complained.

Incidentally, I had never heard of his sending out "specs" in longhand--his were always cleanly presented, typed with the same meticulousness as the content of the specifications themselves.

It is possible, however, that during his last projects for UC, longhand was a necessity, as by then his wife Elizabeth's growing senile dementia included an increase in her tragic pathological jealousy to the point that he was frequently unable to hire even secretarial help.

WTS's First Wife, Rowena

In the taped interviews, WTS's references to his first wife and my mother, Rowena Symmonds, are sparse. The reason for this gap in his life's spoken chronicle was that Elizabeth, whom he married three years after Rowena's death, suffered a lifelong and painfully irrational jealousy of Rowena--so much so that her name was never mentioned when I was a child, and only rarely later. It is because of this that WTS's remarks about his first marriage are brief and often oblique. (See p. 41.)

Rowena Symmonds was one of the two children of William and Evaline Symmonds (the other was a son, Rollin), and she and WTS had met while students at UC Berkeley. William and Evaline had come West from Illinois, as he had been called to Stanford University by David Starr Jordan, to teach mathematics. But his health broke--I do not know what the problem was--so that he gave up his appointment, bought an apple ranch in Sebastopol, and ran that with Evaline's help while still enjoying his skill with figures as a professional surveyor.

Rowena was raised on the ranch, but when I saw her birth certificate, going through another file of family papers, I found that she had been born in Nauvoo, Illinois. Unfortunately shortness of time does not permit my curiosity to indulge itself at this moment, but it would be interesting to research the reason the Symmondses had gone there. Nauvoo, I remembered, had originally been a Mormon outpost, prior to the move to Utah; after that, it was an Utopian community, cooperatively run. I do know that that area of Illinois abounded in such small, idealistic towns which had flowered from the seeds of Emerson and Thoreau. (And the Symmondses certainly were not Mormons: William Symmonds was as robustly atheist as was William Steilberg.)

What I know of my mother personally I have garnered from a few living friends or relatives, and an anecdote or two which WTS told me when I was in my teens. Rowena, initially a UC graduate in botany (as was Elizabeth), was a gifted sculptor, very deft, very sure; she either designed or executed, herself, the detail

on WTS's early buildings. She could model swiftly in wet concrete, she could chisel a woodcarving with precision. The Italianate detailing on Claremont Junior High School in Oakland, WTS's second commission* in his own office, is hers; so are the laughing, Puckish faces set in the front door framing of the house he designed for the two of them at 38 Panoramic Way, Berkeley; so are the neo-Greek concrete masks on one of the fountains at "The Cats" in Los Gatos--WTS had used them many years after her death.

Her work was totally harmonious with the buildings it adorned, and the bond between WTS and Rowena was close and intense--as it was to be, later, between him and Elizabeth.

After their marriage in 1913 they traveled over Europe, studying and sketching together--there had been a long engagement, until he was "in a position" to wed. She taught at a one-room schoolhouse in Sonoma County; he worked in Russel Ray's office in Santa Barbara, sharing rooms with another young architect, Arthur Jory (recently deceased--he was Stafford's brother). Arthur, a skilled amateur musician, told of how he often played, for a lovelorn Walter, piano pieces that Rowena used to play; it eased the waiting, a little.

WTS told me once of her, "No matter how hard up we were when we were first married, there were always fresh flowers in the house." Gently spoken but intellectually independent, she shared with him a passion for all the arts: their trip to Europe in 1913 was, on the part of both, a voyage of constant, delighted sketching. Her red hair might have indicated an occasional flame of temper, for once in Naples a pickpocket tried to grab her purse; she immediately hit him over the head with it. The thief fled unhurt but astounded that a signora would behave in such an undignified manner!

In a monastery somewhere in Spain, the couple came upon an unusually beautiful carved ceiling, and Rowena was determined to sketch it. According to her pocket dictionary, "to draw" was "tirar," and her request to the sacristan for a ladder, so that this slender little woman could "tirar" the ceiling resulted in total monastic pandemonium. She had been, in fact, asking permission to pull down the ceiling.

As she died when I was a baby, I have no conscious memory of her. But I am told she had a splendid chestnut mane, and photographs of her reveal, in spite of the singularly unbecoming clothing

*His first commission was the graceful little colonnade which still stands at the north end of Lake Merritt in Oakland.

of the period, a supple figure, tiny waist, and above the starched collar a skeptically humorous, intelligent face. Even with the rigidity of shirtwaists and petticoats, she seems always caught in motion, on her way to do something more important to her than posing for a picture--perhaps to cram everything she could into her short life.

After Rowena's death in the 1918 influenza epidemic (which killed also their newly-born second baby girl and WTS's mother), he was so desperately taken with grief that, total skeptic though he was in anything to do with the supernatural, he went to a medium (as did hundreds of thousands of others similarly bereft, at that time) in a frantic search for some sort of communion with the three dear people he had lost within less than two months. I have his notes on this episode: needless to say, he saw instantly through the chicanery and sham.

There was a dreadful irony which I discovered when I was going through WTS's papers after his death. Rowena had died first--this was a common tragedy in the flu epidemic, with women in childbirth: the anaesthetic used then was ether, it was inhalant and generated very rapidly pneumonia. There was a service for her, and the brief text, read by Dr. John Wright Buckham (a major presence in the Congregational church and the young Steilbergs' next-door neighbor on Panoramic Way), stressed that one life is often sacrificed in order that another one may survive. That other life--the baby Martha's--was extinguished only two days later, as was that of WTS's mother shortly afterwards.

Losing himself in work was his panacea, and this was so for the rest of his life--total absorption in the drawing board and the slide rule were always to offer him comfort.

World War I

In 1917, WTS (ineligible for combat duty because of a hernia) had applied for membership in the U.S. Navy's Civil Engineering Corps, and the letter he appended to his application form is apropos. Here are several quotations:

"...I feel that the suspicion which naturally attaches to any person of German extraction at this time warrants some statement of my position in this respect. My father, William Steilberg, was born in Hanover, came to this country as a boy, and served throughout our Civil War in the 28th Ohio Volunteers...My architectural

training, as well as my experience in Paris during the first week of the war, turned my sympathies to France at the outset. I subscribe in every particular to the war aims of our Government as defined by the President in his recent address to Congress; and I believe that it is particularly the duty of Americans of German descent to now give proof of the soundness of their citizenship." (Underlining mine.)

He and Rowena had been stranded, first in Paris and then at Le Havre, while awaiting passage back to the U.S.: their voyage of study and sketching was concluded abruptly by the outbreak of World War I. After innumerable bureaucratic foul-ups and several renewals of very brief permits de s jour (the Germanic surname had there, also, aroused suspicion), they at last booked on a freighter, returning in steerage and very inadequately nourished by maggot-ridden hardtack. In spite of having been close-to-interned in France, he lost none of his enthusiasm for the country or its people.

An interesting sidelight to WTS's application to the Navy is the mass of sponsoring letters which supported his joining an adjunct to the Service. One from his old friend Henry Gutterson, the architect, concludes thus:

"His purpose in applying is the highest, a sense of patriotic duty having persuaded him to make the sacrifice, leaving his professional work and his family to serve his country."

Another, of local University interest, is from the late Leon J. Richardson, professor of Latin and a tremendously significant figure in adult education. (As the head of UC's Extension Division, he built what had been an anaemic academic stepchild into a highly prestigious and healthy member of the University's educational family. And as one who taught adults at Extension for twelve years, I, too, well understand the importance of offering the hungrily questioning and highly motivated "older" student the richest possible banquet; and this Richardson accomplished, with even a couple of excellent public relations catchwords, "Lifelong Learning," to his credit.) Richardson, in 1917, was chairman of UC's Committee for National Service, and I offer brief quotations from his letter of recommendation:

"...we can bear testimony to the fine manly character and the thorough loyalty of this American citizen. He is one of the most sterling men in this region...and capable of rendering great service to his country in the present emergency. We recommend him to you unreservedly." I would have known the letter was Richardson's

even without seeing his signature; those of us who knew him can almost hear his voice in the words "fine manly character" and "one of the most sterling men."

WTS's World War I experience as an engineer, designing launching runways, is in the interviews.

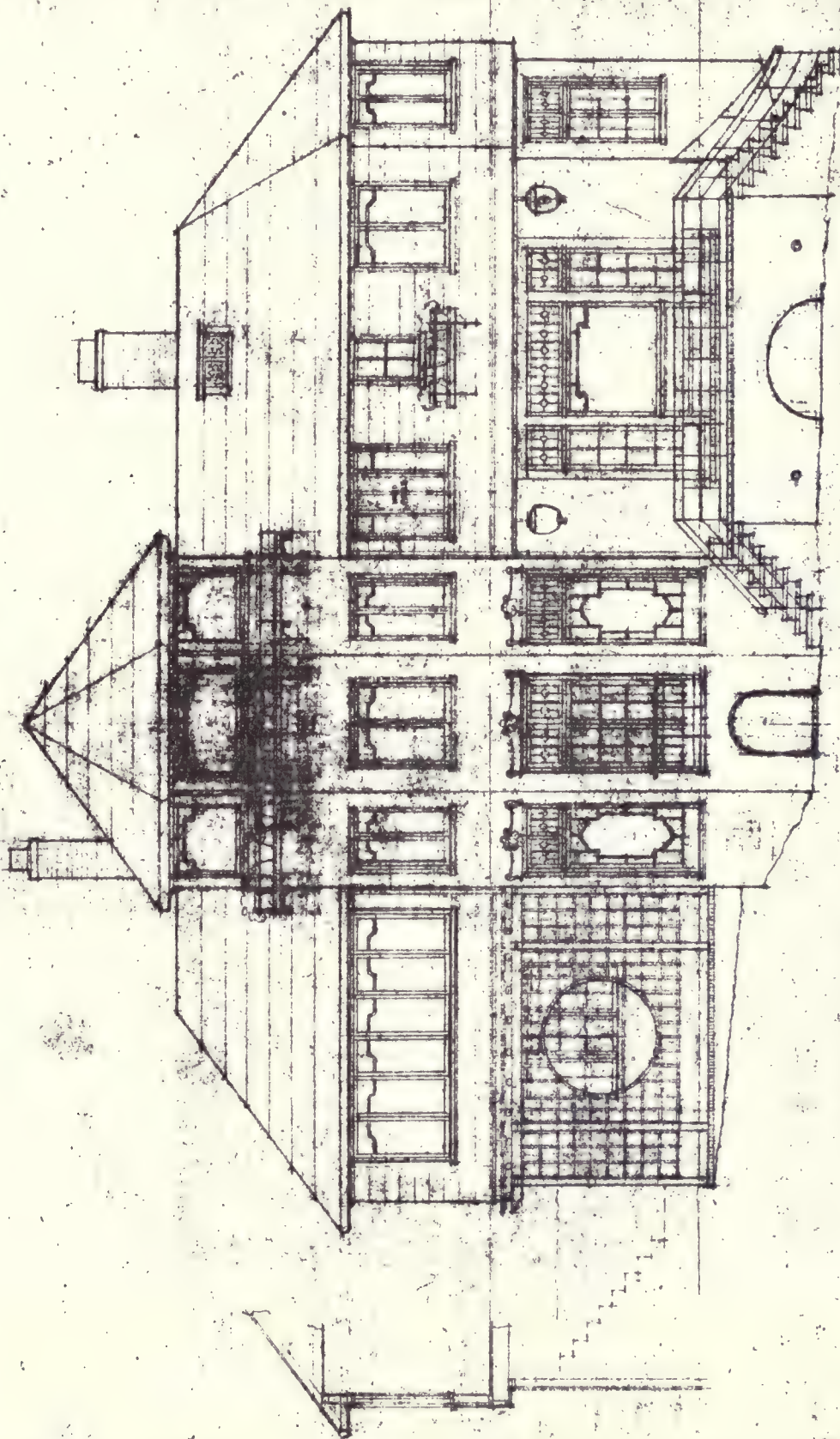
WTS's Second Wife, Elizabeth

In 1921, a widow from Westchester County, New York, Mary Van Everen Ferguson, decided to settle permanently in Berkeley; she had come to know the delightful college town because her daughter (and only child) Elizabeth was a recent UC graduate. In searching for an architect for the house she wished to build on a lot she had just purchased at 1 Orchard Lane, her choice fell upon WTS, already well into his rapid rise to a successful practice. She was charmed by him and his ideas; he was charmed by her and fell promptly in love with her daughter.

Elizabeth offered a combination which he could not resist: she was both brilliant--and he liked women with intellects they developed and used--and she was extraordinarily beautiful. With degrees in botany, she had been both a protégée and an associate of the great authority on West Coast flora, UC professor Willis Lynn Jepson. Her classically lovely face, crowned with dark braids, was coolly serene, masking a rather fiery temperament. Although the marriage was marked by many stormy periods (two very strong egos were involved), the underlying devotion was profound and lasting, and to the end of his life her timeless beauty never failed to move him.

When they were married in 1921, he simply put the tragic memory of his first marriage behind him--very much as many years later he was to accept and put aside another death, that of his beloved Spanish monastery project. When something dear to him vanished, he moved forward, refusing to look back in sorrow.

Out of his meeting with Mary Effie Ferguson evolved the complex of houses on the 1 Orchard Lane property. First, he designed for himself and Elizabeth and me (for three years, I had been farmed out to various kind relatives, and I was enchanted at having my own family again), a small house at 1 Panoramic Way, at the base of the lot; this redwood charmer served as a place for the three of us to live in while the "big house," 1 Orchard Lane, was under construction. The cottage was destined for rental property (what WTS used



WEST ELEVATION

to call "a little tax-payer") once the main residence was completed.

The big house at 1 Orchard Lane was designed to accomodate not only WTS, Elizabeth, and me, but also Mrs. Ferguson and her bedridden mother, Elizabeth Van Everen. Mrs. Van Everen's people had been Quakers and freethinkers, her husband a close friend of Horace Greeley's ("Go West, young man, go West!") and one of the founders of the Society for Ethical Culture, famous breakthrough association of Christians and Jews in New York City.

Elizabeth's background was a mosaic of intellectualism, liberal thought, independent womanhood and Quaker pacifism. Her Quaker female forbears had been active feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and earlier they were Abolitionists, running an underground for Black slaves. It was inconceivable to me and my sister Rosalie (born in 1923) that we would not have careers, and certainly we were both raised almost as boys--not in terms of learning the manly sports--but in the sense of intellectual growth and fruition. As soon as our bents became clear, Rosalie was programmed for science, I for the arts, and our schooling (we were both "accelerated," of course) was augmented by all manner of extra lessons on the side. We were extremely busy little girls.

An aside: My sister is now a child psychologist. I do advertising and public relations, which I somehow blundered into (away from music education) twenty years ago and have remained in ever since, to my father's affectionate disapproval--with promotion and manufactured publicity deeply against his principles. But when I resumed playing chamber music in recent years, he came and listened with a delighted perceptiveness. Arriving halfway through a string quartet, he'd say with a rather self-satisfied grin, "That's late Haydn, isn't it? I didn't think it was Mozart." His ear for style was uncannily accurate and music remained a sustaining delight to him his entire life.

Although he championed most lovingly both Elizabeth's and Rosalie's right to achieve in their fields, he could never be convinced that psychology and psychiatry could be considered proper sciences, lacking, he felt (given such pitifully variable human material), both controlled laboratory conditions and hence demonstrable and rational proofs.

To return to 1922 and the house at 1 Orchard Lane. All three houses on the property--to be described later--were jointly owned, in such a complicated tangle of arrangements, informally made and unrecorded by lawyers, that Gordian knots have had to be cut in later years. Initially, Mary Effie bought the lot; then WTS

constructed the cottage at 1 Panoramic with his funds; next WTS gave his services as architect for 1 Orchard Lane, but the cost of the big house was split between him and Mary Effie. But because it was important to the latter to feel herself a woman of property, 1 Orchard Lane was put in her name. In 1933, when 4 Mosswood Lane was built at the upper end of the property--another rental cottage--WTS designed and financed it...and as Mary Effie was then without a bean, after the Crash, that cottage was put in her name, also. (If a lawyer is at this moment reading this memoir, his head will be starting to ache.) Fortunately, things have now sorted themselves out; I only raise these matters of who owned or paid for what as a sidelight to WTS's character: ownership meant nothing to him, but faith in family unanimity meant everything, as did courteous yielding to an older lady's emotional needs.

Following his marriage to Elizabeth, he gave the house which he and Rowena had shared at 38 Panoramic Way to her parents, William and Evaline Symmonds, who lived there the rest of their lives. In a similar gesture of kindness, he put the house he purchased in Carmel, around 1938, in Elizabeth's mother's name, as she had never been fully able, after losing her money in 1929, to cease thinking of herself as a lady of means, and owning a place in the country was balm to her bruised pride. (She mainly lived there, from World War II on.)

Mary Effie Ferguson

A note about Elizabeth's mother, Mary Van Everen Ferguson, for she figured largely in the life of the entire family. When she lived with us, she managed, with a great show of noisy inefficiency, the running of the household so that Elizabeth could pursue her career. Handsome and spirited, she adored her son-in-law and she took me immediately into her heart when WTS and Elizabeth were married, when I was four.

In later years, I came to understand how frustrated Elizabeth must have often been in social situations, for although she was as brilliant as she was lovely to look at, she was no match for her mother as a raconteur. Mrs. Ferguson could tell a tale as delightfully as could WTS; and her store of them was also enormous, drawn often from her many travels. When the two of them were together at a party, they were a pair of scintillating scene-stealers, with Elizabeth, exquisitely serene-looking in the Quaker

gray she affected, off in a corner and probably seething in quiet desperation.

After the '20s, Mary Effie Ferguson became, as I realized only recently, one of Edith Wharton's or Henry James' ladies of "reduced circumstances": she loved travel, she made friends instantly, and she was an utterly shameless house guest, reappearing for a "visit" with comet-like regularity both in the U.S. and abroad. And like the semi-professional house guests recorded by Wharton and James, she paid her way, in those pre-television days, by being thoroughly entertaining as a teller of tales.

WTS and Money

There is a question raised somewhere in the transcribed interviews as to why WTS was "not financially successful." Actually, he was, excepting for several very bad years at the start of the Depression (and they were bad years for most architects, as the building trades are the first to suffer in an economic crisis). But in the '20s he was prolific, successful, even fashionable, designing--in friendly competition with Maybeck--for the Bay Area's cultivated, imaginative well-heeled. (Our family year-long junket about Europe in 1927 must have cost a fortune; we did not travel economy class, and WTS could easily afford the expense.) And once he was established in his new career of structural engineering in the '30s, his earnings were again ample.

But neither he, nor Elizabeth, nor Mary Effie was capable of hanging onto a red cent. (Rosalie and I, naturally, became incurable pinchpennies.) All three spent lavishly--nothing but the best quality, and they enjoyed it thoroughly and saved nothing. Numerous times in past years when WTS and Elizabeth were out of the country, or when Elizabeth was ill (she was very fragile emotionally and had several nervous breakdowns), I was called in to keep track of their rental properties, deposit WTS's checks, and pay the bills. The personal retainers alone paid WTS for long-term structural projects were, even by today's standards, most impressive.

WTS and Elizabeth had excellent income properties but charged ridiculously low rents, with the firmly benevolent conviction that this insured "nicer tenants." And certainly those virtually free-loading tenants--selected on the basis of intellect, charm, and potential friendship--never had the gall to complain or to request repairs. I can think of two, however, in recent years, who insisted on raising their own rents--bless them!

Mary Effie, in the Quaker tradition of "plain living and high thinking," spent little on herself, but "She sends generous checks to every organization whose literature has the word 'peace' in it," WTS often protested. "Sometimes I suspect she's financing the entire Communist party without realizing it."

She had been left a comfortable--not spectacular--income by her husband who died very young, but these pleasant dividends from what must have been a rather risky portfolio virtually vanished in the stock market crash of 1929. During the debacle, she and I were living in Switzerland, and I can still remember her dramatic, "I'm ruined! I'm ruined!"--which she indeed was. From then on, WTS and later Elizabeth, when she had become established in her new field as a psychiatric social worker at the close of the '30s, joined in supporting Mary Effie with tactful checks (with large portions of them vanishing for "peace").

In any event, out of principle, WTS would never put a penny in any form of securities but believed only in rental property as an investment. In his body of ethics the stock market was merely a form of gambling, and he was always highly indignant over the fact that in the '20s and '30s there were regular police raids on San Francisco's Chinese "gambling dens" while only a few blocks away the brokerage houses (including that of his favorite cousin, Henry F. Swift) were allowed to ply undisturbed what WTS considered a rather morally dubious trade.

In the 1960s, when Elizabeth's native instability increasingly engulfed her, he devoted much of his time to caring for her, and from about 1968, when she had become tragically and prematurely senile, his life was centered around meeting her emotional need for his nearly constant presence. But while she slept he worked, read, kept up in his field, and managed to poke about the University, keeping a fatherly eye on the UC campus.

The reason that he was so often reluctant to accept pay for his services for his recent work for UC Berkeley was, he told me, that he was afraid that the many demands made on him at home might prevent him from completing a project, or, worse, even from computing accurately. (As I mention elsewhere, the safety of a building was a passion with him.)

Last Days with Elizabeth

In spite of the tremendous emotional burden which he bore in caring for Elizabeth, at the same time they had at that point a recurrent closeness greater than ever before in their lives. She had two areas of complete rationality, a shaft or so of sunlight which broke through her sadly clouded mind, and these were areas in which WTS and Elizabeth had always shared a great deal and with much joy. One was their common passion for animals, the birds, and the beauty of nature; the other was an all-absorbing, highly committed interest in politics and government, and in this field Elizabeth's quick mind flashed out with the perceptiveness it had formerly had.

He said to me once several years ago, in her presence: "Betty has become worried that her hair has got thinner than it was, but just look, notice how much better the beautiful modeling of her head shows. It's lovely, isn't it?"

At this writing, Elizabeth is a total invalid: immobile, her mind has completely taken flight. What remains is an evocative physical presence, still graced by the serene brow and pure profile that WTS so loved.

IV BERKELEY IN THE 1920s

If the reader (who must by now feel himself thoroughly "time-warped") will bear with me, I should like to take him back to the 1920s in the Bay Area: a glance at the social milieu of that decade is necessary for an understanding of both WTS and of his work in two fields.

Berkeley in the '20s was Cambridgian in the sense of Cambridge, Massachusetts. As in New England, the intellectuals formed a society of "We few, we happy few." There were progressive private schools, in which part of the curriculum was always dancing of the Isadora Duncan persuasion, and they sprang up like mushrooms; moreover, they prospered. (My sister and I attended several.) There was very little divisiveness between town and gown, simply because the "town" members of that society were nearly always equivalent in their gifts or achievements, cerebral or intuitive, to the "gown" members.

While the rest of the country may have been shaking its bugle-beaded hips to "Yes, sir, she's my baby," high on chancey potables brewed in the bathtub, Berkeleyans--the Berkeleyans who counted, in the eyes of the "happy few"--were intoxicated with a bubbly Asti spumante of ideas, invention, and creation. I think perhaps that the decade was truly the last one of the 19th century, in Berkeley: the "crowd" were romantics, but they were always craftsmen, whatever the field. And with the post-war boom there was money, lots of it, to nourish creative imagination. In that decade, WTS's work was well known, he was one of the "crowd," and there was a bounteous inflow of both work and dollars.

His own house at 1 Orchard Lane, built in 1922 and to be described shortly in this memoir, was built for the scale on which he and his family lived: it was an exquisite 12-room "maid-killer," as large houses used to be called in the days of household help--and "help" we had. (But the help were always punctiliously called by him, and by Elizabeth and her mother, "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss," never "Maria" or "Giuseppe" or "Daisy," as all three employers respected both these good people's energies,

expertise, and their dignity.)

Berkeleyans in the '20s and early '30s accepted with warmth San Francisco's patrons of the arts. They were allowed within the charmed circle, but "They come from Piedmont" was universally pronounced in the most condescending of inflections. To come from Oakland, of course, was even worse--but WTS viewed these little snobberies with tolerant amusement, taking individuals on their own merit. However, he once told me, with great delight, of a time when he had absent-mindedly handed a San Francisco streetcar conductor an East Bay streetcar token: "We don't accept none of your Oakland currency," snarled the conductor.

In the Bay Area of that day I find interesting parallels to life styles and thought patterns of the late 1970s. Handcraftsmanship; freely expressed liberal and original thinking; feminism; what was then called--and widely practiced--"companionate marriage;" an acceptance of what we now consider the "Renaissance man;" and even a sense of costume in both men's and women's dress, particularly, as now, for social occasions.

Handcraftsmanship--a philosophical parallel, in terms of this chronicle; for in the '20s handcraftsmanship was basically the final offering of several centuries' guilds, which dwindled and vanished in the '30s in this country. Now reborn, handcraftsmanship's first awkward, clumsy steps prompted WTS's combined admiration in the '70s (for principle) and despair (over execution). "People will buy anything today if it's made by hand," he grieved, and despite his sympathy for youth, he could not suppress his irritation at the too-often inept handling, by young self-styled craftsmen, of wood, clay, or glass. He felt that they had no moral right to market their wares until their skills were firm and sure. (But, I must ask, who was there still alive to teach them, in America? Now, they are learning good craft, self-taught, the hard way, and I salute them.)

To return to the social life of the time:

The ladies went forth to concerts or dinner parties dressed in delicately mushroom-pleated satin Egyptianesque evening dresses by Fortuny of Venice, trailing what were then called "Mandarin coats," (looted from China), heavy with silken flowery embroidery, rainbow striped at the bottom--the evening wrap "uniform" among Berkeley women. The women added, of course, a discreet whiff of Houbigant's Quelques Fleurs. It was a permitted fragrance, as was 4711 cologne, in that Emersonian air.

We--I write "we" because interested children then, as now, accompanied their parents to concerts, the theater, and parties--heard Schumann-Heinck on one of her numerous "farewell tours," Paderewski on one of his "farewell tours," and Yehudi Menuhin in his debut recital at the age of four. Menuhin was a solemn little boy in black velvet knee pants, with a magnificent and extraordinary head, a visage with sharply chiseled maturity. "He has an adult face, like the young Napoleon," my father commented, "but far wiser."

We heard Fritz Kreisler, playing in the Greek Theater late at night, awake the birds in the surrounding trees with one of his now-famous blagues--a phony "Tartini" of his own composition, tongue in cheek, played with a charming chirping avian counterpoint.

We heard Jane Cowell heroically cause the Greek Theater to ring and shake in Antigone.

When I was a freshman at UC in 1933, Max Reinhardt brought his glorious Midsummer Night's Dream to Berkeley: up to the last act, it was played in Faculty Glade. Hermia--Olivia de Havilland, my age, 16--was adorably "never so weary, never so full of woe" and wandered gracefully amidst the veteran oaks of the Glade; and a hyped-up kid, Mickey Rooney, then 12 or 13, bounced, scooted, and yodeled a very eerie (and clearly much practiced) laugh as he wrought his sinister elfin mischief. The last act of the Midsummer Night's Dream, a "drag" and a problem to all directors, Reinhardt solved by conveying the entire audience by flaming torchlight up the hill to the Greek Theatre. Bedazzled, Berkeley's good citizens thus rounded out happily an enchanting evening amidst Reinhardt's glittering Baroque pomp on stage, which camouflaged most effectively the play's frankly contrived ending.

I take the reader three years over the decade because boundaries in culture were not all that mathematically defined; Reinhardt's Midsummer Night's Dream was in the same romantic spirit and production lavishness as The Miracle in the '20s, another imaginatively soaring spectacle. Or was it kitsch? In 1976, who can pass judgment? But in both plays, Reinhardt celebrated the essential romanticism of the period, the 19th century.

Another aspect of Berkeley in the '20s was the openly approved and socially accepted state of non-matrimony of many of the couples. Like many young people today, they were unmarried but most uxorious. These couples, proudly unsanctioned, were graced in their married friends' eyes with nobility, honesty, and courage, and they were

spoken of admiringly: "They're not married, you know."

But in later years, it was murmured about as a sad capitulation that these airborne spirits were ultimately forced--by the inescapable tug of earthly gravity in matters of property and patrimony--to become legally, bourgeoisly wed.

As Elizabeth's family were Quakers, she and my father were married in an improvisatory, spoken-from-the-heart Friends' Meeting kind of ceremony (here again is a similarity to today's lack of traditional ritual in weddings). But for reasons of that time, in which a Friends' service was legally unacceptable, the young new Steilberg couple was forced to sneak out during their own wedding reception and run up Mosswood Path, for a brief second marriage service hastily performed by a dear Unitarian minister neighbor, Earl C. Wilbur.

Another correspondence to the 1970's life style was feminism. Enormous breakers of feminism kept sweeping over the United States. Prohibition, an innocent idealism, generated, of course, more ills than it cured, but women's suffrage widened a clearer path.

In the Twenties in California creative couples, each productive in his and her own field, abounded. They respected each other's time, privacy, and achievements. Closest of these to WTS were the writer Charles Erskine Scott Wood and the poet Sara Bard Field; Roi Partridge, etcher, and Imogen Cunningham, photographer; Benjamin Lehman, professor of English, and Marion Parsons, writer. (WTS designed houses for Erskine and Sara, and for Ben and Marion, described later.)

Only a month before he died, Imogen Cunningham phoned him, and with her characteristic blunt good will, barked affectionately, "Walter, I'm going to photograph you. You're a much better-looking man than you ever used to be." The date for photography was planned, between these two vigorous old parties, for January 1975, after she returned from an exhibit of her work in Santa Barbara, but his life had ended in December.

I mention feminism here because it was also part, and an essential part, of the structure of WTS's life. His first wife Rowena, described earlier, was a sculptor, working with her husband in detailing his designs. Elizabeth had also graduated in botany but changed her course in the Twenties, embarking upon the far more stormily exciting seas of psychology and psychiatry and becoming, in the late Thirties, a psychiatric social worker, which field she pursued with passionate involvement until her retirement.

Then, as now, there were the eccentrics of the arts--and the frauds.

There was a couple who produced hand-woven "loom-danced" fabrics--the weavers danced as they thrust the shuttles. It was proposed that an auxiliary art produced a more soulful textile; and there were also numerous untalented ladies who squirted garish dye at random on knotted fabrics, calling this harmless lunacy "design."

Then there was a middling lady poet from Ireland who nightly set out a saucer of milk so that the "little people" would not play impish pranks on her; and as the milk dish was empty every morning she had, she said, ample proof that the little people had drunk it up...and had therefore played no pranks: Q.E.D.

People of this sort with their various human foibles amused WTS hugely, and their caricatures of craftsmanship aroused only tolerant laughter in him, as long as they remained in their own fields; but if pose or incompetence ever invaded the fine arts or architectural design, he ranted with indignation.

V WTS AND CHINA

I cannot resist a brief digression here, as a few irresistible anecdotes about WTS's love affair with the arts, crafts, and people of China may give the reader as much pleasure as I have in recalling them.

During the '20s there was an ancient Chinese, Mr. Ho, who dropped in at 1 Orchard Lane when he felt like it (he refused to make appointments), to mend and maintain the wicker and rattan furniture with which the dining room was lightly and airily furnished and which was, of course, Chinese. As doors were never locked in those days in Berkeley, I often came home from school to find that Mr. Ho had simply walked in and gone to work repairing a chair that he felt needed attention. Mr. Ho's hands were incredibly swift and arrogantly sure, and the twin strands of his long white moustache fell to his waist, from the face of a sage. This benign countenance was surmounted by a forehead which rose to a bit of a point, in a living example of the Chinese convention in art of representing the very old with a peaked pate--the shape of a peach, symbol of longevity. I suspect that WTS had hired him as much for this as for his expertise, or perhaps Mr. Ho simply walked in and went to work one day, on his own initiative.

We never ate from anything but Chinese dishes: even coffee was served in thin handleless porcelain cups. Anything hot appeared at the table in pewter t'ings, the lower vessel filled with hot water, the upper one containing the food, which was thus kept warm in the very sensible Chinese custom of thousands of years.

WTS was convinced that detail should please the hand (an Asian concept) as well as the eye. He delighted in the tactile element in his dark-colored, smoothly carved Chinese furniture--teak--with which our living room was furnished, and he refused to drink tea or coffee from a thick cup or mug, maintaining that a great wall of pottery between the drinker and the beverage imposed a barrier against one's gustatory pleasure. (It is in fact a wonder

that we did not eat with bamboo chopsticks, also!) Incidentally, we did have, however, during Prohibition, for parties, wine. This came from the Novitiate in Los Gatos for which WTS had done some designing, and the Brothers were in the kindly habit of donating surplus sacramental wine to good friends who had done architecture or other work for them.

On family visits to Chinatown we ascended to the upstairs restaurants for lunch, where WTS's many Chinese friends had given him warm entr  e. Being allowed upstairs was an honor, as usually only the Chinese people themselves were welcome there. We ate hot steamed rice dumplings stuffed with soy paste in the Cantonese style, sitting on very high chairs at very high tables. "That's because, while the Chinese people love to have their children about them at meals," WTS explained to me, "the little ones do get restless and they want to run around, and this way they can't reach up and pull a hot dish of food down on themselves and get burned."

The chief cook at one of WTS's favorite lows, upon seeing a family of "round eyes" coming up the stairs, invariably appeared, casually waving an enormous cleaver--until with a great beam he recognized friends and welcomed us in. But I once saw a group of caucasian tourists blunder upstairs by mistake; the chef airily waved a thoroughly gory cleaver at them (he had simply been frag-menting chicken), and said, pleasantly but firmly, "You better eat downstairs." The tourists made a precipitous and terrified descent to the lower restaurant, convinced that they were about to become victims of tong warfare, or worse.

On those lunch-hour forays up and down Grant Avenue, WTS found some extraordinary art, and we lived with it. Once he came upon and bought, for \$50, a particularly masterful scroll (by Li Shih, dated 1644) depicting the three Taoist gods of prosperity, wealth, and longevity: we thought of it always as a painting of a tender scene between three grandfathers and their small grandsons, as that was its emotional impact. (The two companion scrolls were purchased by the British Museum, where they now hang.)

The Chinese "Fu dogs" over the dining room mantle at 1 Orchard Lane were our lares and penates, as were the two large Chinese Fat Shan ceramic figures in the living room, representing actors playing the parts of the sun and the moon. The sun, a ruddy vigorous man, holds aloft a golden disc, and the moon, a fragile and feminine creature, points a graceful toe and carries a silvery circle. These yang and yin personifications were set in arched windows which had been designed for their placement.

WTS had great rapport with the Chinese and Japanese people: it was the mutual love of beauty combined with a very strong work ethic. I think he was somewhat closer to Chinese friends in Chinatown, partly because he shared with them elements of temperament, an open gusto in living, a quick humor, and a disarming immediacy in getting to know the other person; but he also had the highest regard and affection for Mr. Shibata, of "The Daibutsu," and Mr. Shiota, whose shops he haunted, as well as for the great teacher (and one of my art professors at UC Berkeley) Chiura Obata.

In the mid-Twenties, halfway between revolutions, he planned to go to China and had in fact bought passage there. But the Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line, on which he had his ticket, warned him that worse trouble was brewing and that they could not take the responsibility for endangering an American life. He was deeply disappointed. He had worked on a book on the arts and crafts of China and wanted very badly to go there--not only to complete his research, but to study the architecture and to be among the people he so admired.

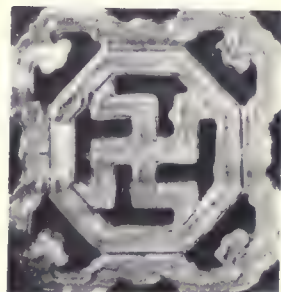
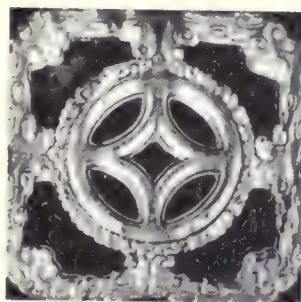
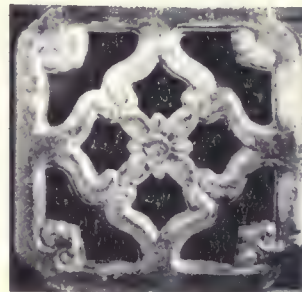
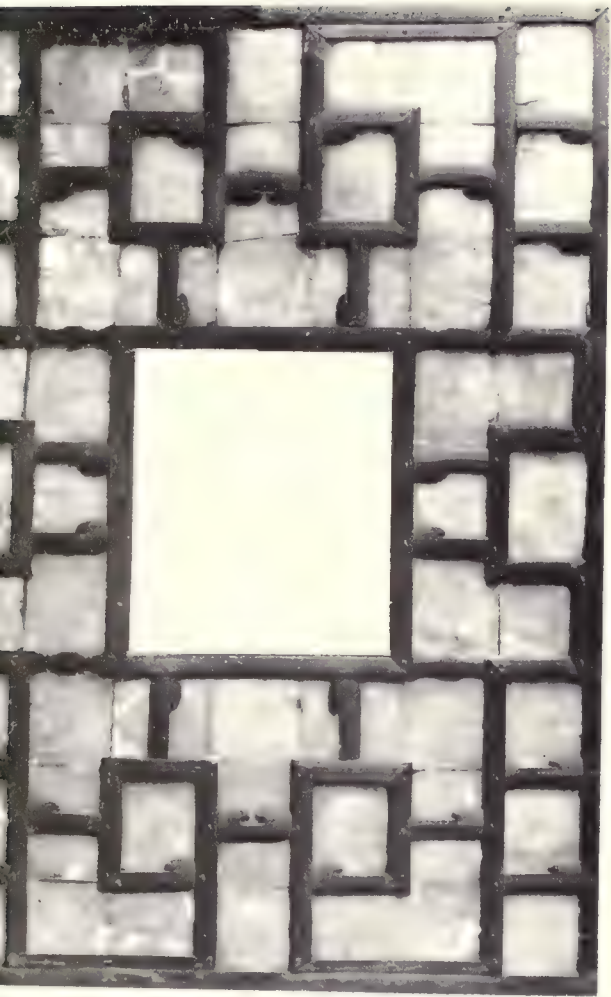
But of this project, the book remains only a series of photographs destined for illustrative plates and they are superb. (I have yet to come across the text among his papers.) WTS was one of the first people in the United States to own a Leica camera and it was his constant companion and a professional tool--he was forever snapping cracks, crevasses, tilts, and other flaws, as well as the beauties, in his constant study of every building he passed. He also used the Leica for his book in what was then an innovative technique. In photographing ceramics he took two exposures under different lighting conditions. One exposure recorded the decorative detail on, say, a plate, whether the detail was a miniature genre painting in elegant azure strokes, or whether it was a forcefully calligraphed poem. The second shot caught the sheen of the glaze; thus the ultimate print lost neither of two of the essential elements in Chinese ceramics. (Color photography was, in the early '20s, nonexistent, of course, but this became a delight to him as soon as it was invented.)

Top left: A Chinese domestic window (also from WTS's book), late Ch'ing period, probably for mercantile class use. It is crafted from skillfully worked bamboo splits and capiz shells; notice the consistently repeated "cloud" motif. (This was the window WTS found on one of his daily Grant Avenue prowls, which generated his use of capiz shells in lighting fixtures).

Lower left: Wen Chu, goddess of wisdom, early Ch'ing period, against an embroidered court ceremonial robe ("Mandarin coat"), formerly in Walter Steilberg's collection and photographed ca. 1921 for his book on the arts and crafts of China.

Top right: Samples of the perforated tiles in green, blue, or amber glazes used consistently by Steilberg (photographed here as an illustration for his book) as furnace outlets, cold-air intakes, ventilators, balcony rails, and many decorative as well as utilitarian functions.

Lower right: Bowl lid, late Ch'ing period Famille Rose porcelain, photographed ca. 1921 by Steilberg. This illustrates his then-innovative use of double exposure in photography of ceramics (also used as an illustration for his book).



VI TWO EVENTS OF THE 1920s

The Stadium Battle

I'd like to make a brief mention of the two events of the '20s which shook Berkeley thoroughly. The first was the city-wide battle over the placement of the new UC Stadium--only a stone's throw from our house at 1 Orchard Lane. (WTS's strong opinions on this are expressed on p. 44 of the interviews.) He marshalled a handful of other architects to his side and may have alienated others, temporarily: there were two very militant camps on the issue.

He felt that instead of destroying the verdant loveliness of the UC Botanical Gardens, then nestled at the western end of Strawberry Canyon, and, incidentally, also razing a half dozen handsome private houses, several designed by Ernest Coxhead, the University should erect the Stadium on flat land near the Bay, so that inevitably heavy foot-traffic in the Dwight-Panoramic area would not cause dangerous congestion in case of fire and so that the Stadium would also be more easily accessible to the general public for a sport which he deeply enjoyed--football--and which he watched enthusiastically his entire life.

WTS had great impatience with those who would not take a stand and literally stick their necks out for principle. His bitterness against Maybeck for his unwillingness to commit himself on the Stadium issue publicly lasted for several years, in spite of his respect for Maybeck as an original and highly creative designer; but the bitterness later faded completely away.

The Berkeley Fire of 1923

The great Berkeley fire of 1923 was documented about a year ago by Janet Flanner in The New Yorker; a more personal and immediate account is that which Harlan Eveleth wrote for the Berkeley Gazette and which was printed Wednesday, September 17, 1975.

The fire was a tremendous drama in the life of our family: we had just moved into our beautiful new 1 Orchard Lane; Rosalie was exactly two months old, Elizabeth's grandmother was bedridden. WTS had providently installed a sprinkler system, not only throughout the garden but on the roofs of both the big house and the redwood cottage; he kept everything soaked (on our side of the campus there was still water) and as the brutal hot wind blew flaming firebrands onto the house or into the garden, we doused them out. Entire newspapers suddenly consumed by the heat floated onto our lawn; one could read whole pages, as they were intact.

It was said that the reason the fire took hold so rapidly, high on those dry fall hills, was that the Berkeley and Oakland fire departments delayed action with arguments as to exactly whose territory the fire occupied; this may be apocryphal, but in any event, such territorial quibblings never occurred subsequently.

As we dealt with increasing amounts of charred and smoldering aerial flotsam and jetsam, we saw the flames reach over the top of "Tightwad Hill" (so called because it was--and remained--a haven for students with slim purses, who could climb there and watch the football games in the Stadium below), and we knew then that it was only a matter of minutes before the fire would engulf Canyon Road, Panoramic Way, and Orchard Lane. But as we were deciding what to hastily load into the Franklin, the wind changed, abruptly: reversing its direction, it caused our hill to be spared, but in that reversal, gathered up many homes, which the fire had missed earlier, for consignment to the flames.

There was a light and charming postscript, however: terrified pets of all sorts had fled to the safety of the south side of the campus; our trees were thickly populated with canaries and parrots, all of whom we fed until homes could be found for them; and we housed thirty dispossessed cats--who promptly assumed that they had a permanent new home. (We could not keep all of them, but found them homes--WTS and Elizabeth had attempted to have them cared for at the city pound, but they simply walked out and re-appeared back at 1 Orchard Lane, twice.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a personal account of the historic Berkeley fire of 1923 which broke out 52 years ago today and leveled most of North Berkeley. The author, Berkeley resident Marian A. Eveleth, watched as his home on Hilgard Avenue was destroyed in the flames.

It was 2:15, the afternoon of Sept. 17, 1923.

The phone rang in my office in San Francisco. My wife, Lynn, told me a large fire was raging in the Berkeley hills among brush and eucalyptus trees. "Some houses in the residential district on the hill above us are burning. Firebrands are falling around us. Come home at once!"

Going home was a tedious experience in those days. No bridges crossed the bay. One had to catch a trolley to the Ferry Building, then wait for the ferry and finally transfer

to a train near Yerba Buena Island. In those days East Bay trains ran over a long fill and piles to a terminal near the island.

I stood on the bow of the ferry with others, watching the fire engulfing Berkeley north of the University of California. From that distance each burning building looked like a bonfire contributing to the great mass of black smoke driven by a north wind over Oakland to the south. The Campanile served as a focal point from which we could judge the location of our homes.

A man next to me said: "Looks like my home has gone. God, I wonder where my family is!" I replied, "I'm not sure but I believe my place has not been reached by the fire yet. My

wife phoned me about half an hour ago and said cinders were falling on the roof." We finally docked and I transferred to a Berkeley train.

Berkeley's business center was a scene of utter confusion. The fire line was about 10 blocks away advancing due south. Dense black smoke a few hundred feet overhead, an occasional firebrand, cinders swirling in the gutters. Most of the stores had closed. People on roofs with pails of water.

An elderly lady spoke to me: "What shall I do? Where shall I go? I've lost my home and everything!" "Lady," I said, "the Red Cross will take care of you."

I used to transfer to a Euclid Avenue street car to reach my home,



four blocks north of the university, but no cars were running now so I started walking and running. I was thinking: "Has the house burned? My family, are they safe and where are they?"

Rounding a corner at LeRoy Avenue and Hearst I saw our place a few blocks away burning furiously. Continuing up LeRoy to within a block of the fire I was stopped by the heat.

Flames were pouring out of the windows, then the roof fell in and

with it a new pole and radio antenna I had just put up. The framework of a house being built next door was blazing, our other neighbor's place was on fire.

A quarter mile of houses on the north side of Hilgard were all afire. The intense heat, crackling noise and explosions of the inferno was a sight I shall never forget!

I became very thirsty from the heat and my running. A hose lay on a lawn nearby. I turned the faucet. No water! No water to fight this conflagration! Around me nice homes, well kept lawns and gardens as yet untouched by this fiendish fire. But not for long. Not a human being in sight.

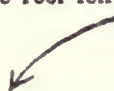
Other than the fire, all I heard was

the wailing of a dog and an occasional boom of a dynamite squad blowing up buildings near the university. What a scene! One still etched in my memory.

It was now around five o'clock in the afternoon. I joined a group of spectators gathered on the ground of the university along Hearst Avenue. Across the street were five or six, two story, shingled houses. Firebrands were falling and all of these buildings seemed to catch fire simultaneously.

But as we watched the wind changed, veered from the north to the west and became a gentle breeze. The conflagration was over. The rest

(Turn to Page 3, Col. 1)



of Berkeley and probably a part of Oakland was saved.

At this point I had every reason to believe my family had been evacuated and were with other evacuees but I had no idea where to look for them. Like many others I was temporarily confused by the events of the past few hours.

I had a compelling desire to go behind the fire lines, then unguarded, to see the ruins of our home, so I walked northwest of the burned section to Cedar Street, then east to Hilgard.

Block by block I made my way up Cedar, along the middle of the street carefully avoiding fallen power lines and transformers, downed poles and trees (still burning). Walks were buckled, pavement hot, a burning gas jet and a standing chimney the requiem of every home.

Finally I reached our ruins: the lighted gas jet, the fireplace chimney, mounds of red hot ashes, stump of the palm tree, burned flowers and grass—what was left of our home! Walking past what had been an empty lot I saw a familiar object, our old hall clock brought from England to Boston many years ago then shipped with our household goods to Berkeley when my father moved his family to Berkeley in 1913.

The weights were missing but the case could be restored and the "works" were not damaged. I placed my business card under the hands of the clock.

By this time the press was exploring the area, too. The following day's issue of the San Francisco "Call-Bulletin" reported: "Atop a concrete and brick fence post the ruins of what had been a splendid clock stood. On the face of the clock, wedged in by the the hands, a business card had been left. By the flare of a dozen torches one could read 'Property of H. A. Eveleth'."

And in the same paper I was listed

among those missing in the fire. I was quite surprised!

The metal remains of our piano lay on the front concrete steps of our ruins. An attempt has been made to save it. It was not an expensive piano but it was the one my mother made me practice on when I was a kid.

Now it occurred to me that my family and my father may have been taken to my uncle's place on Hill-gass Avenue where the fire had not reached. So I started walking, and there I found my wife and daughter Helen, and we had a happy reunion.

Father had phoned earlier and told them he was safe and had rented a room in a hotel on Shattuck Avenue across the street from Hink's. I phoned him and we met the next day.

After Lynn phoned me at the office, the roof had caught fire and the pressure was so low water from the hose would not reach the top of the roof.

A fence caught fire and flames ran along toward the house.

Lynn began collecting a few items and put them in the baby carriage to

GREAT BERKELEY FIRE OF 1923

wheel them to safety. We had no car. Suddenly several students came in the back door. "Save the baby!" cried one. Lynn, with a "no, you don't" expression on her face picked up our 15 months old daughter, Helen, firmly escorted her out too their car and drove her to the police station.

Later, a Red Cross lady drove them to Hillegass Avenue.

While my wife was being evacuated, my father was in the back yard depositing our silverware in a bag so it would not be burned. On the front porch he had gathered a few books and his shaving equipment but failed to include his 160 year old violin.

Along came some more boys who told him to come with them. He started back for the silverware, but they picked him up by the arms and legs, put him on the runningboard of their flivver.

"Now hold tight! We'll take you down to Berkeley." Hold on tight he did, with both hands, one good leg and a game leg!

A considerable quantity of household goods were picked up by students and others in advance of the fire and were brought to the Berkeley Corporation Yards.

The university had closed and students were asked to help evacuate people and save goods. Red Cross was picking up elderly and other folks, leaving them at the police station.

When we went to the yard to see what we could find, we picked up an oriental rug—the one I used to play on up to the age of three or four—also a wedding present given to my parents, a nice table lamp received by us as a wedding present, and to our surprise, the baby carriage with the things my wife had put in it before she was evacuated.

On the 18th the burned section of Berkeley was patrolled by men from Headquarters 159th Infantry, C.N.G. Berkeley. We were given a "Search & Removable" permit. We then returned to the ruins and found the silverware, now fused together, and we picked up the clock, still in the vacant lot.

The next week things had cooled and we opened our electric range, now sitting on the floor of the basement, and in it we found a nicely cooked chicken. Father should have put the silverware in the range with the chicken.

A local dealer asked if he could have the range and later he displayed it at the San Francisco Electrical Exposition held in the fall. A sign on the range read as follows: "FOUND AFTER THE BERKELEY FIRE—This University range was found among the dwbrs after the Berkeley fire: legs melted off, fuses burned out, connections were attached and new fuses put in. The heating elements were found to

be unharmed. The amazing performance of this wonderful range is the sensation of the San Francisco Electrical Exposition."

At the show our range was merrily boiling a large pot of water.

It took less than three hours for the fire to destroy about 575 buildings, lay waste to 85 blocks and render 5,200 people homeless. Beds and food for refugees centers were set up at Stephen Union on the U.C. campus.

The Chamber of Commerce established headquarters for relief in the Whitecotton Hotel Annex, 2070 Allston Way. Some folks took refugees into their homes.

Money came pouring in from Red Cross chapters and from the cities of Oakland and San Francisco. The utilities, having lost their meters in the fire, presented no bills for one month.

Estimated loss was over ten million dollars but those were 1923 "5-cent coffee" dollars. There were no fatalities. Most insurance companies paid right away.

Fire inspectors could not determine how the fire started. Many hikers and picnickers had swarmed over the hills the previous day, Sunday. Monday had been the second day of high temperatures, low humidity, and strong north winds.

Perhaps no one will ever know what or who caused this devastating chapter in the history of Berkeley.

And what of the refugees? The thousands from the Berkeley fire undoubtedly found food and shelter, at least temporarily, with relatives or friends, the Red Cross and other institutions, but many had to start from scratch and, over a period of years, restore their homes and contents.

But their treasures; the heirlooms, family pictures, musical instruments, presents and valued books are gone forever.

—Harlan A. Eveleth

After the fire, a new crop of architectural flora sprouted from the ashes. Neither Maybeck, Morgan, Steilberg, nor Guttersen, this style aped (unsuccessfully) qualities of their work and parodied "The Simple Home." Carmel was flooded with these overnight-springing, wavy-roofed, knobby-bricked, poisonous mushrooms, builder-designed; today in Berkeley most of them are gone, and in Carmel they have become mercifully obscured by foliage. As WTS used to say, "A bad architect's best friend is ivy." He called this short-lived style "Mother Goose Renaissance," and the two best-known examples of it surviving in Berkeley in 1976 are the apartment house called "the Fallen Arch Palace"--first by legitimate architects and later by students--located on the corner of Hearst Avenue and Spruce Street, and another apartment complex, Fox Court, on University Avenue just below Sacramento Street.

Europe in 1927

Of the '20s, another set of rich memories in the family's life is a pleasure to recall: our entire coterie of five and our year-long "Grand Tour" of Europe. I offer the reader only one reminiscence, because it offers a charming sidelight to WTS, father and inquisitive architect. He was constantly delighted at my four-year-old younger sister's courage, as with sturdy little legs, Rosalie climbed every single Gothic spire he did--and he climbed them all--even past the circular stairs and up into the terrifying heights reached only by wooden (and probably also medieval) ladders. Meanwhile, I stayed below, sketching (as I was supposed to be keeping up my drawing skills) with obviously spurious concentration one of the lower--and inferior--gargoyles, and shaking in my boots.

VII FRIENDSHIPS IN THE '20s, AND LATER

WTS's and Elizabeth's friends during the '20s were the same group, the "crowd" whose members frequently commissioned residences; in that decade he and Maybeck were friendly rivals for commissions amongst the Bay Area's literati. The Steilbergs led an active and stimulating social life--but WTS never thought of these delightful evenings as "playing the social game." I refer the reader to the sections in the taped interviews posing curiosity as to "how he got his commissions"--he did not "get" them--they simply fell into his lap from friends, or from friends of friends who had seen his work. The same was true of Maybeck, but to a lesser extent, as Maybeck had been long established when WTS started his own practice.

In the '40s, after World War II, when WTS was asked again to design but chose to remain in structure, he felt that the climate for architects was quite different: the competition for commissions was indeed intense, and very often the most successful in obtaining the plums were, in his opinion, the architects who "played the social game," as, for example, he felt that his very good friend Gardner Dailey did. When he spoke of Gardner's conscientious nightly circulation among San Francisco's fashionably wealthy, it was totally without censure: he simply felt that he and Elizabeth were not cut out for social life which was anything but a warm informal closeness with totally congenial friends. These they had in abundance in the '20s--but by the '40s, many of the "crowd" had scattered, particularly those who had achieved national and international fame.

The Woods and "The Cats"

If WTS nearly idolized Einstein among the century's monumental thinkers, he had a near reverence for Erskine Wood, among his close friends--and clients, for he designed Wood's estate, "The Cats" (the main house, studio, lodge, and garden), in 1926, high on a hilltop above Los Gatos. The entrance is signalled by two large

California lynxes by the sculptor Robert Paine; it is still a familiar landmark on the highway from Los Gatos over the hills to the sea. While the architecture of "The Cats" will be described in part in the section of this memoir on WTS's style, Charles Erskine Scott Wood and his achievements are amply documented in the Regional Oral History Office's volume on his wife, Sara Bard Field.

Erskine and Sara's achievements, in satire and poetry respectively, are well known, so let me write of those two as I remember them as people, for the extraordinary combination of unselfish warmth and creative brilliance each had was a rare trait. Erskine--lethally barbed satirist (Heavenly Discourse, now reissued in paperback, and its sequel, Earthly Discourse), spoke slowly, meditatively, with humor and wisdom, but without the acidity of the Discourses; his magnificently handsome face had kindness carved into it. Sara, poet (her prize-winning epic Barabbas was written, as was Earthly Discourse, in the studio at "The Cats") and active feminist, had the same sort of sweet benevolence etched in her lovely face. I think I have never heard a more beautiful speaking voice than hers: tender and melodious, with a caressing quality for those she loved. I can still remember her "Oh, Erskine!" whenever he made a remark that particularly entranced her.

I think there was no commission WTS had that gave him greater pleasure, for Erskine and Sara's ideas and his were unbelievably harmonious; and they simply gave him a free hand.

While "The Cats" was under construction, our whole family moved for six months to Los Gatos, so that WTS could supervise more closely this delightful job. We had a Franklin, a most elegant car with its V-angled windshield, but which inevitably boiled climbing the steep road up to the site of the Woods' house. Our entire clan would then get out and push, with good humor. The Franklin, needless to say, was garnished with gray velvet curtains and crystal bud vases. (At that time Berkeley was still much populated by electric automobiles with similar interiors, driven by elderly ladies at the break-neck clip of perhaps ten miles an hour, up and down Piedmont Avenue.)



"The Cats"

Charles Erskine Scott Wood's residence in Los Gatos, designed by WTS in 1926, photographed shortly thereafter. Not yet in place is Ralph Stackpole's monumental sculptured figure commissioned to adorn the face of the chimney, but Ray Boynton's mural is visible below. In the foreground court is sculpture by Beniamino Bufano as well as by Rowena Steilberg. [Left is detail of concrete fountain sculpture by Rowena Steilberg] To the left, in shadow, a small amphitheater rises up the hill and encircles the court. [Photograph by Ansel Adams, reproduced courtesy of Katharine Caldwell.]

Right: C.E.S. Wood, at 80. Nero, the pup facing the camera, was WTS's dog for twenty years.



Bufano

WTS delighted in working with his artist friends, particularly at "The Cats," and their charming foibles were recounted with great pleasure for many years afterward. Beniamino Bufano (always known as "Bufano," in the continental style, and never, as those who didn't know him referred to him, as "Benny") did, along with Ralph Stackpole, some of the commissioned sculpture. While on the job, Bufano lived in a rather ramshackle cottage near the site. The roof of this shack leaked quite badly, but beside the sculptor's bed was a pile of shingles. When the roof took to dripping directly upon Bufano himself when he retired, rather than nailing a few shingles on the roof, he nightly laid down to sleep, first putting the shingles over himself.

Paine

Another entertaining tale from this same period: Robert Paine, the sculptor commissioned to do the lynxes at the entrance to "The Cats," and a neighbor and very good friend of my father's, who shared with him a great and empathetic passion for animals, wished to observe literally first-hand the formation of the upper jaw of a California mountain lion. For this purpose, he visited the San Francisco Zoo and fearlessly but slowly reached into the cage where a very handsome lioness crouched in tawny dignity. She did not object. He put forward a gentle hand, talking to her kindly and affectionately, and touched her furry chops. As Robert Paine recounted this afterward (sounding quite hurt, as at a breach of trust), "Do you know what she did? She sarled at me, and all I was doing was checking the modeling of her maxilla!"

Life at "The Cats"

Not simply an idyllic retreat for two writers, "The Cats" became a cultural hub for Berkeley and San Francisco creative people in all the arts in the '20s and early '30s. Erskine Wood was no less important for providing this focal point for creativity than he was for his published words: a nourishingly delicious minestrone of new ideas, new concepts, new skills was served up and shared at every one of the Woods' frequent and lavish parties. These gatherings were also glittering, as they included not only Berkeley's and San Francisco's most gifted in art, music, and writing, but also friends

from Los Angeles from the film colony, and from New York as well. I met Ramon Novarro there shortly after the film "Ben Hur" (which I had seen at least three spellbound times) was released. My disappointment at the lack of the heroic presence he showed on film--he was slight, shy, spoke little, and then softly in a hesitant voice--was compensated for by the fact that I had actually conversed in person with my most adored movie hero of the moment.

Another detail about Erskine Wood: he was one of the earliest Americans with the sense to invest in paintings, and he had a shrewd eye. Also, he commissioned works (and supported their creators) by living artists in a way which has not been met in this area since... at least, at the private level. "The Cats," C.E.S.W., and Sara presented a Renaissance scene, except that the creative people were not servants of the rich, but honored friends--and doubly honored with stipends, if the commission alone didn't buy the groceries. (Pride was always saved, by the way.)

Other Friends

Other major creative figures and friends of WTS's included Sheldon Cheney, the writer on art and drama (and founder of Theater Arts)--as well as early impresario for Isadora Duncan; Thornton Wilder, the dramatist; Leonard Bacon, the poet; Charles Keeler, author of The Simple Home, referred to in the interviews; Elizabeth Duncan, Isadora's sister; Henry Cowell, the innovative composer in the complex sonorities of "tone clusters;" composer Ernst Bacon; the photographer Ansel Adams; and Irving Pichel, who then ran a magnificent repertory theater in Berkeley and who later went to Hollywood to act and to direct films; Ernest Bloch, the great Swiss composer; and many others.

Among his San Francisco friends were the sculptor Ralph Stackpole, whose work he admired very much and who was commissioned to execute the monumental figure on the east wall of "The Cats," and earlier, the painter Maynard Dixon. Bufano's early work (not the later mosaic-encrusted style) he also loved and he knew him well. (Both sculptors, as I have mentioned, worked with him on "The Cats.")

Sheldon Cheney

To come forward in time a little: Just before WTS's death, Sheldon Cheney, who at my father's age was equally acute of mind and agile of body, bought a house on Panoramic Way, planning to move to Berkeley from Pennsylvania. One of his main reasons for returning West was that he and his treasured friend WTS might enjoy their energetic old ages together. It was enchanting to watch those two sprightly oldsters together, springy of step, sharp of eye, with intellects snapping affectionate retorts back and forth. The last time I saw Sheldon with WTS, the former remarked, "I just paid a visit to my son. He's retired, you know. But I am still working." This remark was made with charming but definite one-upmanship.

Albert Bender

Another San Francisco friend, and they remained close all their lives, was Albert Bender, financier and probably San Francisco's first major collector of Oriental art, which he donated generously to local museums at Stanford, UC, and Mills College. Albert always carried a cache of small Oriental art objects in his pockets. He had one of the largest hearts of anyone I have ever known, and when someone he was fond of did or said something that pleased him, he would reach in his pocket and pull out a present. When I was twelve or so, he saw and liked some drawings I had just made; he beamed and produced from a pocket a perfect translucent white jade bracelet and popped it on my wrist.

Ansel Adams and Cedric Wright

Ansel Adams, then a talented but ferocious pianist, and his companion in mountaineering, Cedric Wright, a gifted but tentative violinist, both moved into their true fields in this era: photography of the California Sierra, both in its geologic grandeur and the intimacies of its delicately articulated flora. Cedric, also, gave splendid parties at his "Barn Studio," designed by Bernard Maybeck, which still stands at 2525 Etna Street in Berkeley.

Albert Elkus and Others

Albert Elkus, mentioned earlier, became, along with his pretty, quietly wise wife, Elizabeth, another lifelong friend; WTS remodeled their house in Berkeley in the '30s, when Albert had just become the dynamic chairman of UC's Music Department. Other UC campus friends were the painters and professors Ray Boynton (Ray had been commissioned to do a mural at "The Cats," and Mills College's chamber music hall's murals are his) and Worth Ryder. In the Philosophy Department, Will and Pre-Raphaelite-lovely Margaret Dennes (the former became later dean of the Graduate Division) and Stephen Pepper, the great aesthetician, with his forthright but tender-hearted Ellen, were also enduring friends.

Friends on "the Hill"

Panoramic Way and "the Hill," as we called it, offered a treasury of warm friendships. All three Lewis families (referred to in the interviews); Benjamin Lehman, professor of English; James Allen and Clifton Price (Greek and Latin, respectively) and their brilliant wives; Robert Trumpler, professor of astronomy who also served as director of Lick Observatory, and his vital, ebullient wife Augusta, one of the founders of the Consumers Cooperative of Berkeley, were close. The Trumplers remained dearest to WTS and Elizabeth, and dear to me also--I was magnetically drawn, always, to their bright, cheerfully quarrelsome brood of five children and fascinated by the family's polyglot custom; as they were Swiss, of speaking French and German on alternating days.

The Isadora Mystique

Other good Hill friends were the sculptor Robert Paine and his mathematician wife, Mary Trueblood; their daughters, Evelyn (Ratcliff) and Elizabeth (Jay) were also my childhood companions, sharing a passionate admiration for Isadora Duncan and for Isadora's fond if faulty personal mythology about ancient Greece.

The vogue for Isadora was tremendous in Berkeley in that decade; there was hardly a little girl who, draped in an unbecoming beige pongee tunic, did not spend one afternoon a week in a "Greek dancing" class. My uncle Theodore Swift, a precise and conventional man, reported on his first viewing of a Duncan recital, "You know, that woman had danced her way half through Beethoven's Fifth Symphony before I realized she didn't have a stitch on." While this report was a testimony of admiration, WTS heard it with a little affectionate skepticism.

Although there was genuine admiration among Berkeleyans for Isadora's freeing the art of the dance from its rigidly artificial bonds sur les pointes in classical ballet, there was also a bit of gentle teasing of the cultist affectations: the great behavioral psychologist Edward Tolman (another congenial friend, with his wife Kathleen, of WTS and Elizabeth) was renowned for a brilliant take-off he did occasionally at parties--his "scarf dance." I saw it once, peering around the stair corner at 1 Orchard Lane (I was supposed to be asleep in bed). It was delicious: a tall, lanky, bony man in a short makeshift tunic, his early-bald head shining, loping about on long bare feet and flourishing a tatty scarf with parodied grace.

Friends on Campus...

WTS kept always in touch with, particularly, two of his own former professors: Charles Derleth in engineering and Warren Perry in architecture. And he would have been enchanted to know that donations in his honor, after his death, went to the Bessie Sprague Memorial Fund, as Bessie, the Architecture Department's secretary and unofficial mother hen to students and faculty both, was one of his favorite feisty-but-affectionate old ladies. (He told, with delight, of the way she galloped noisily through the creaking wooden halls of the old "Ark," summoning the distinguished chairman with a bossy, "Warren! Warren! It's time for your class!")

In the field of mathematics, Professor Raymond Henri Scioberetti, his wife, and her sister Alice Habis-Reutinger of UC's French Department were other good friends; they were also connected by marriage, as WTS's sister Alma had married Otto Habis-Reutinger, a distant cousin. (The family was Swiss; my cousin Otto, Alma's and Otto's son and WTS's nephew, of Stinson Beach, has sorted out the genealogy.)

The list of friends in architecture is enormous; as my deadline for this memoir is close, I can only sketch in those who come quickly to mind, hoping that those omitted will not be hurt.

...and in Architecture

He shared an enduring kinship with Will Corlett, his oldest friend; they had been in college together. The bond continued after Will's death through his son Bill and Bill's wife Mary, and their daughters Cameron and Mandy.

Other close architect friends (and sometimes colleagues) were James Lefeaver, Harry Gutterson, Thaddeus Joy, Ed Hussey (who had worked in his office), Will Hays, Michael Goodman, and Ernest Born. Further afield, Harwell Harris of Los Angeles and his wife Jean were frequent visitors to 1 Orchard Lane-- Jean (Bangs) had been a college friend of Elizabeth's. He was on a warm basis with both Richard Neutra and Eliel Saarinen, as well as Charles Warren Callister; he did structural engineering, in his second career, for Harris, Neutra, Saarinen, and Callister.

Winfield Scott ("Duke") Wellington, who later created, from a sort of ladies' sewing circle, a splendid Department of Design as its chairman at UC, had trained in WTS's office and remained always in touch with him.

In later years, WTS became devoted to Robert and Evelyn Ratcliff and their wonderful brood (the Ratcliff and Lawton children, living across the street from each other, were happily intermingled throughout their childhoods; Christopher, my son Randal's age, climbed in Ran's window every morning regularly at 7 and I shooed him out nightly at 10). Joseph Esherick and his first wife, Rebecca (Erskine Wood's granddaughter) both trained in WTS's office, as did George and Verna Hodges and Norval Miller. Others associated with him who became firm friends were Norman Jensen and Norma Willer (along with her architect husband, Witold), and Robert Canfield; these three he worked with on University projects during his engineering years.

Gardner Dailey

Gardner Dailey was a lifelong friend and they often collaborated, in Hawaii on the Surfrider and the Princess Kaiulani Hotels in the '20s and '30s, as well as the addition to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel; and in 1955-56, on the Morrison Music Building and Hertz Hall on the UC campus.

WTS and Gardner were always close. After Gardner's funeral the burden of WTS's grief was lightened a little by his amusement at overhearing several young architects ask reverently, pointing to him, "Is that Mr. Maybeck?" (The physical resemblance to Maybeck was by then marked.) Maybeck, though, was long dead, but both architects had merged in an architectural past.

For the purpose of this chronicle it is sad that WTS outlived so many of his contemporaries in architecture; there is almost no one of his exact generation among his colleagues still alive to fill in the facts properly and technically about what he had achieved in residential design. But as always, he wanted his work alone to speak for him, so perhaps this lack is not too tragic. For that reason the reader is directed to the appendix listing his designs, and to the next part of this memoir.

VIII THE STEILBERG STYLE

The Victorian Elements

WTS rejected--with stentorian volubility--Victorian architecture; but while condemning its tasteless elements--ostentatious pomp, poor proportion (pomp and happenstance?), and decorative millwork run amok--he absorbed into his own style the admirable Victorian principles of elegance, excellence in craftsmanship, and built-in detail. (He was, after all, a man of the 19th century.) And although he would never have admitted it, verbally condemning all structures of the Victorian age with equal gusto, his style embraced not only several principles of that era but also specific design factors.

For example: the bay window, sometimes expanded into chambers which break the bonds of a rectangular room. Leaded glass mullions, to fragment and thus soften the glaring Western sun at the day's end. Colored glass--not stained, but amber-shadowed or green-tinted, leaded or in a simple sheet, providing both variegated light and privacy to the dweller. Imaginative fenestration: I know of none of his designs which has a uniform set of windows marching across the side of the house in dull precision. Windows are both functional and decorative, placed in unexpected spots and with unconventional shapes, and one of his trademarks was the small Romanesque-arched window, a trio of them delineating a staircase, a pair flanking a fireplace. (The fact that he never once used a standard-size window or door, but designed both to the exact proportions he wanted, is a source of visual joy and practical exasperation to present-day owners of his houses when they need to make replacements.)

Still another Victorian design factor: a tower--not only because it is, as is the bay window, a freeing agent for rectangular forms, but because there persists, in that modified round itself, the romanticism of the past, an emotional fillip to the design verities.

But last, and most philosophically important: comfort for the body and the spirit. A pleasant, peaceful, practical dwelling, a house which, as he so often said, "is designed from the inside out." There is no parallel here with the "machine à vivre," coldly functional, the galley kitchen open and dispersing broccoli fumes to the living room. Because interior design--liveability, the individuality of each room and the flow between rooms--was always the starting point, his exteriors are sometimes less appealing than the interiors. But once one opens the front door, the house welcomes you and enfolds you. And it also promises--as did the houses of the 19th century--privacy to each individual dweller, as he wants or needs it. And endurance.

A Letter from a Client

While going over some of WTS's papers my sister came across a most touching letter written him by Mrs. August Thiel in 1957; he had designed Mr. and Mrs. Thiel's house in Piedmont in the '20s. Because it turns such a personal mirror to WTS's sensitivity to physical and spiritual comfort along with his insistence on quality of workmanship, I quote, in part:

Dear Mr. Steilberg,

I would like to tell you about a house--a house designed by you over thirty years ago.

This house was built for a family with two small, very active boys. Through the years of their growth it accomodated these boys and their friends very well. The boys grew up and then there were more Boy Scout gatherings and parties. Later, during college years, there were weekend groups with as many as nine boys tooting saxophones and clarinets and having a wonderful time...

After the war one of the boys came home with a bride. Another came home with a wife and child. They felt secure in the old place, and this was home until they could be rehabilitated...

Through all these years that house has stood as a symbol of sturdiness and security to this family. The floors did not warp, the windows worked, the brick stairs held to their mortar. The hardwood trim withstood the onslaught of time and wear. Not many houses can come through the years in such good condition.

A few months ago the house was sold because the original owners have reached that time in life when they cannot climb hills anymore.

The small house, in which they now live, has windows that stick, floors that squeak, and stairs that are breaking apart. This makes me realize the worth of the architect who built the house at 230 Carmel Avenue, Piedmont, and we wish to thank you for the years of good living you made possible for us.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Greer Thiel

(writing for the family)

The Influence of China

WTS came to know and love the arts and crafts of China through the flood of scrolls, porcelain and pottery, Buddhist statuary and other temple carvings, teak furniture, and silken embroidery that poured into Chinatown before and during the Twenties, at first with the initial wave of revolution, later with the more ruthless plunderings of the Kuomintang, with Mandarin palaces and temples alike yielding up sometimes battered treasures to the Bay Area's many aficionados.

WTS fell totally in love with Chinese art, and during his lunch hour he would beat an eager path from his San Francisco office in the Flatiron Building to Chinatown, where he bought with lavish delight. Many of his purchases became his own splendid private collection, but many others had a destiny as built-in detail in the houses he designed. (This latter use is well exemplified in his own residence at 1 Orchard Lane, described shortly.)

While the built-in wooden carvings, heralding a door or gracing a fireplace, are hallmarks of his style, as are the green or umber perforated tiles, serving as vents, balcony rails, or cold-air intakes, he always felt that China's greatest gift to him was not the delightful detail but a new point of view in design: the curve in architecture.

My house, at 83 Eucalyptus Road in Berkeley, never satisfied him. When I told him, 15 years ago, that my husband and I had found a Steilberg-designed house--designed in 1921--that we wanted to buy, he snorted, "Worst damn' house I ever did." When pressed for reasons, he presented two: the client had been parsimonious about built-in detail, and more important, he, WTS, had not yet incorporated the curving lines of Asian art and architecture into his own style. (A year later, designing his own new residence at 1 Orchard Lane, this gift from China had been assimilated.) My husband and I loved 83 Eucalyptus, though, and we bought it, and alone now, I am still very content there. But every so often, when he came to see us, he would say in regret, touching a newel post or mantel, or glancing at the roof-line, "This should have been rounded...a curve would have been so much pleasanter to live with...that's what I learned from China."

Other aspects of his love for Chinese art and architecture, crafts, his book on these, his friendships with Chinese people, etc., are described earlier in the more personal part of this document.

Victorian and Chinese Fused

The Victorian (which he abhorred) and the Chinese (which he adored)...not such an incongruous fusion. Partly because of matchless craftsmanship in both areas, partly because of impeccable detail, and partly because what came into Chinatown and what he knew best, in the early Twenties, was of the Ch'ing period--ornate, flowing, involuted, subtly colored.

But this is not to brand WTS as an eclectic: it only gives me pleasure to point out elements of other styles which he absorbed into his own; and there were other basic elements, very originally his, which I have not seen elsewhere. Once these elements are recognized, anyone with a knowing eye will never again mistakenly label a Steilberg house as a Morgan or a Maybeck or a Gutterson. (As all architecturally knowledgeable folk know

well by now, Berkeley abounds in false attributions: mullions--it's a Morgan! or a beamed ceiling--it's a Maybeck! or fanlights--it's a Gutterson!)

...and the Medieval Concept

There was a third element which entered his design in the early 1930s, but it was more truly a concept: the medieval ideal of permanence. As materials infallibly affect design, WTS's houses built of reinforced concrete have some stylistic differences from his earlier ones of redwood or frame finished in stucco. Even so, the Steilberg stamp is unmistakable in the half-dozen earthquake-proof, highly fire-resistant residences, as all the characteristic elements are there, from the basic ones of proportion and fenestration to the detailing in curved lines and Chinese perforated tiles.

But as the concept of permanence grew from his personal history and the nature of the times, the Depression, WTS's turning toward it belongs elsewhere in this memoir.

His Own Residence: 1 Orchard Lane

Probably the best way I can describe WTS's design style is by leading the reader, in a verbal house tour, through the architect's own home at 1 Orchard Lane in Berkeley, which he designed for himself and his family. For 1 Orchard Lane was the dearest child of his architectural being. Since it was his own residence, he could lavish all his skills, let his imagination take flight, see his envisioned design in all its richness and complexity, and then live enfolded within it. (Moreover, as any architect designing his own home knows, the inevitable concessions, no matter how small, to the client were nonexistent.) Other residences of his design display most of the elements of his own house, but the latter, built in 1922-23, sums up WTS's style with the elegantly individual sort of flourish the 18th century penman added to his signature.

One should keep in mind, also, that this house, along with others from his drawing board in the '20s, reflected a period of affluence on the part of clients and of superb craftsmanship among the workmen and artisans, many of them European. Affluence and craftsmanship were symbiotic in this period before 1930--perhaps for the last time in the modern age.

Other designs of WTS's which manifest the same qualities of his very personal style and with which I am the most familiar are the following residences: 180 Stonewall Road, for the Harold Sawyer family; 2323 Hearst Avenue, for the Robert Wetmore family; 1418 Le Roy Avenue, for Professor and Mrs. Ira B. Cross; 1456 Le Roy Avenue, for Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Ricker; 1900 Yosemite Road, for Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leavens. All houses are in Berkeley and all were designed in the 1920s. There are at least thirty others in Berkeley in addition to those elsewhere: the reader is referred to an appended list of WTS's designs.

To visit 1 Orchard Lane as it was designed in the '20s, then, we are in the present tense, fifty years ago.

"The Hill"

Imagine first a hill directly east of the western end of Bancroft Way, above the UC campus. "The Hill," as its residents called it, is golden-sloped above, with the massive greenery of oaks in its northern furrow, and climbing nearly halfway up, a haphazardly terraced, eccentric 19th century orchard, mingling silvery almond trees, French prunes, mulberries, and even persimmons. Today, Panoramic Way still snakes its narrow path to the top of the hill, and intersecting Panoramic and ascending in a more sedate curve is Orchard Lane, a broad flight of stairs. The prospect in 1922 is directly through the Golden Gate to the West, and in the hollow below (where the Stadium today stands) is UC's Botanical Garden. Both "The View" (as the San Francisco Bay vista was then always called--no other view earned that spoken capitalization) and the topography are important here, since they are in every house WTS designed. Because most of his residences perch on hilly areas, the relationships between site and plan, slope and mass, fenestration and outlook, are intrinsic. (The engineer as well as the artist in WTS responded always with glee to the challenge of a 45-degree lot, and many of his plans are "upside down houses," the living and dining rooms and kitchen at the top of a downslope, the bedrooms below.)

...and the House

At 1 Orchard Lane, the house climbs in three stories up the orcharded site, and during construction every fruit tree that could be saved remained. From each level, glazed French doors open onto terraces, for with WTS, the concept of bringing the outside indoors was expressed earlier, I think, than with either Morgan or Maybeck. Not only do the staggered stories and openness to terraces bring a sense of freedom into the daily chores of living. The fenestration, with many of the rooms so window-filled that one is often hard put to find a wall surface broad enough on which to hang a painting, is typical of WTS's style, but nevertheless this too augments one's sense of comfortable liberation, of communion with nature.

Throughout his life, he heartily disliked curtains, feeling that they cluttered up good design and obscured it. In later years, he roared with pleasure when I quoted to him Franklin P. Adams' witticism (originally in F.P.A.'s column in the old New York Herald Tribune, "The Conning Tower"), "As for most curtains, hanging is too good for them." This became one of WTS's huge store of anecdotes on which he drew to make a point in his own architectural aesthetics, and certainly the rooms he designed in every house had warmth and elegance without the distraction of fabric at the windows. (I have lived in two other houses designed by him in my adult life and only recently, with Berkeley's expanded population and one's consequent needs for both privacy and safety, did I capitulate to curtains.)

So at 1 Orchard Lane, smoothly crafted Venetian blinds, of wood stained to match the sashes, cut glare or insure privacy, but when either pulled up or let down do not destroy the clean elegant lines of the window framing.

The Dining Room

The dining room at 1 Orchard Lane is unique in its rapport with nature, the site, and its human function of eating as pleasure. It is octagonal: glass doors open onto terraces to the north and south, sheltered by almond trees, and in 1976 by oaks. Three nearly ceiling-to-floor windows, their expanse gracefully modified by Chinese-curved framing, face the Golden Gate, the Botanical Garden, and the still-peaceable college town of Berkeley below. To the east are mirror

1 ORCHARD LANE

Top left: A recent photograph of 1 Orchard Lane, Berkeley, WTS's own residence, built in 1922-23.

Top right: The view seen from the third story tower room. Note the Chinese perforated tiles used as a railing. (See external view in photograph to the left).

Lower left: The record cabinet, with set-in Chinese carvings concealing the "victrola" in the living room.

Lower right: The living room fireplace with set-in Chinese carvings of dragons from a temple altar rail and a paneled mahogany ceiling



Photographs by
Arthur Gough

doors (leading into the butler's pantry), in which diners seated with their backs to "The View" can still enjoy its reflected image. (The dining table is, of course, a circular one.) The eighth side of the octagon offers a small fireplace adorned with handmade leaf-green tiles; above it, the leaded amber glass cabinet doors echo the mullions used at the top of the windows in both dining and living rooms. To return to a more recent year, WTS explained to me, "You see, what leaded glass windows do above a large pane is to soften the light. They're not just decorative--they help break up the glare from the western sun, and in California, that's important." This device he used repeatedly in Berkeley, Piedmont, and Peninsula hillside houses. (At "The Cats," designed three years later, WTS's use of diagonally leaded mullions moves into a more sophisticated area: softly interacting shades of amber and green are set in irregular shapes of different sizes, forming a rhythmically cohesive diagonal pattern.)

The Living Room

The living room, also giving on the west and with its own lattice-shaded terrace, exemplifies another aspect of WTS's design and one which he employed to as great a degree as his client's pocketbook would allow: wood as a sophisticatedly detailed interior finish. (He was never an inexpensive architect, as the reader may have inferred by now.) Done in Philippine mahogany left its natural gently rosy color, the ceiling is intricately beamed and paneled, with a loving, meticulous craftsmanship long vanished in 1976. The floors, also in Philippine mahogany, are waxed to a deeper glow of the same hue, and the same wood is set in a concentric octagonal parquet pattern in the dining room.

WTS loved built-in storage, and this house is nearly a monument to that concept. The living room's east wall, around the fireplace, is almost solid bookshelves, as are other wall spaces between the wide windows. (He was fond of the decorative quality of row upon row of books, their colors in muted contrast; and to the end of his days, every time he bought a new book he ripped off, in irritation, its glossy dust-jacket before he shelved it--or even read it.)

Chamfered corners, the transmutation of the Victorian bay which he used so frequently in his designs, open up the southern end of the living room, and across each chamfer are bowed window-seats with music cabinets under them. Above, amber glass panes

soften the light and provide privacy, both, and they are surmounted by mullions in the same pattern which adorns the dining room windows. More built-in storage is at the south wall: a cabinet, for the concealment of the hideous Victrola, is adorned with exquisitely carved (and delicately tinted, by him, in soft hues) Chinese teak chair-backs. Another pair of similar carvings is above the china cabinet in the dining room, over the fireplace. Beneath the cabinet for the record-player are others, in which to keep those great thick pancakes of Edison records of Schipa and Galli-Curci, and later, the Beethoven symphonies recorded by Toscanini.

For in WTS's design, every inch of storage has one of two functions--and often combines them: one is to display beauty, such as a good library (and here the shelf above the bookcases presents many of WTS's Chinese objets d'art as well); the second function is the concealment, with practicality and convenience, of anything which clutters up or is dissonant with the harmony of a room...like that Victrola, crouching behind graceful Chinese medallions.

Set beneath the mantel is a row of gilded carved panels from a Chinese temple altar rail: each one represents a small and quite amiable dragon. (WTS always delighted in the individual character manifested by every tiny mythic beast in this parade; his feeling for graphic and plastic art had a strong bent toward the representational. However, neither skillfully representational kitsch nor "camp" fooled him in the slightest.)

The fireplace itself is set around with tiles--hand-made, to his exacting orders--in subtly differing shades of dusty rose, in quiet affinity with the Philippine mahogany woodwork. A correspondence is in my house on Eucalyptus Road: there the fireplace tiles are in misty umber tones, again in rapport with the woodwork, in this case, golden oak.

Tile is used more dramatically in the College Women's Club (1928), where the fireplace in the large hall is surmounted by an octagonal mosaic of tile, depicting an actual Berkeley scene and worked out from a cartoon he had "commissioned" me to make. The scene, a dear and familiar one, shows Elizabeth with her coronet braids and little Rosalie in the "Dutch cut" of the time, walking on a hill, with the Bay and the Campanile--"The View"--in the background. The Stadium's suggested edge is there, and above it a radiant sunset fans across the sky. Although the original cartoon had been mine, the exact indication of every precise shade of the sunset's gold and crimson and the hills'

green were laid out by him, tile by tile, for the ceramist to follow. His watercolor pattern shows a touch that was his addition and completely in character with his love of a private joke: accompanying the family walkers is a very close translation indeed of the Roman mosaic originally at a doorway in Pompeii: a panting dog in the same posture as the famous CAVE CANEM. (The varicolored and individually shaped tiles must have cost a fortune.)

I am reminded in a later year of the stained glass window over the front entrance of the Victorian mansion at 1536 Oxford Street in Berkeley; the original owner, a sea captain, had so loved the Bay view--which he also enjoyed from the top of the turret of his house--that he wished a replica of that vista to greet him the moment he returned home from the seas. I doubt, though, that WTS had ever paid any attention to the house on Oxford Street; as he gave no quarter to Victorian architecture, it is probable that he simply marched past its rather gawky proportions and repetitive millwork with a disapproving head-shake.

The Kitchen

Returning to 1 Orchard Lane, then, enter and enjoy the kitchen--for an enjoyable room it is. Reached through a butler's pantry lavish with cupboards, the spacious kitchen offers the cook a kindness which was rarely given her in architecture of the period: "The View," through spacious west windows. Most "Old Berkeley" houses condemned the cuisinière to an eastern exposure, where stingy windows revealed the discouraging sight of a dank and ivy-covered bank. Another blessing--and I believe it was the first local domestic use of this innovation--is a hotel dishwasher, a rather handsome spherical affair set in the wall near the sinks. (When WTS died, it was still operative, even though over fifty years old.)

This forward look is found elsewhere in WTS's designs: the kitchen at "The Cats" has what may well have been another residential innovation in 1926--the stove's burners are set directly into a counter, with handsomely tiled counters for work areas attached directly adjacent. (At this period, the California kitchen had no counters whatsoever, excepting the narrow shelves under the cupboards, and it was frequently too small to accomodate a table. One could only assume that the cook, if Italian, stirred the pudding with the bowl perched on one hip, or if Japanese, busied herself with a hibachi on the floor.)

In 1976, glancing over WTS's original west elevation drawing, I find, to my astonished pleasure, that the kitchen was intended to have contained even an element of fantasy: the west window was to have been circular--again, a translation from the Chinese, the "moon gate" of welcome. Why this charming idea was abandoned, I do not know; it may simply have been the practicality required for Maria, who held forth in the kitchen in 1923--he may have realized that she would have had less light to work in, and "design from the inside out" won over an elegant fillip to the exterior's beauty.

There is a back entryway for the icebox; since virtually no door in Berkeley is ever locked, prior to 1930, the ice man, the milkman, the butter-and-eggs man, and the grocer make their deliveries there, even putting the perishables away. There is an ample laundry, complete with clothes chute from the upper levels, and there are speaking tubes on all three floors. These last, intended as conveniences for the adults, turned out to be perfectly delightful playthings for the children; my sister and I and our playmates spent long rainy afternoons chattering over what was in effect our own telephone system. (Our real telephone number in 1923? It was Berkeley 1-200; calling home, you gave it to the operator, verbally responding to her "Number, plee-uz?")

Upstairs

On the second floor are four bedrooms, each with a distinctive quality of its own; the personal flavor is achieved by the form of the room, its window framing (often with the Chinese-curved insets), and, of course, color.

Color

With WTS's acutely sensitive eye for color, hours as well as pigment have been poured into the mixing of paint in every one of his structures. At 1 Orchard Lane, sashes and frames are painstakingly matched to the soft green of new springtime almonds; the gold of the kitchen picks up the warm shade of the summer hillsides. These two colors WTS used elsewhere very widely: the houses he did in concrete, in the early '30s, have that same friendly deep palomino shade, wiped into the interior concrete walls while still

wet. It is not only through the lavish windows that the outside is brought within. He uses a similar technique at 1 Orchard Lane on the living room walls: dull gold pigment was wiped and shaded into the few plastered surfaces while they were still damp; the same procedure is widely utilized in the 1930 residence he designed for Florence Atkinson at 31 Panoramic Way, later purchased by WTS's friend of many years, architect and UC professor Howard Moise, for the latter's own home, and to which Moise later added a totally harmonious upper story.

A heritage from China is his use of color under the eaves. Here, at his own house, "It's sky blue, to match the heavens when you look up," he said to me, as the painters were at work. Besides the colors of California's earth, trees, and sky, there is often in his work the Chinese combination of blue and green, the former the rich cobalt of Ch'ing porcelain, the latter its close cousin, the azure-cooled shade of the perforated green Chinese tiles, WTS's trademark most easily recognized by an eye not trained to perceive the more basic elements of proportion in architectural style.

Aside: Julia Morgan also used the tiles, but only occasionally, as she modified design to meet the client's wishes--note Robert Ratcliff's very acute and accurate remarks on this, on p. 156 of the interviews; and in a nearly Georgian-derived residence, and she did many, her impeccable good taste would never have permitted even a minimal detail incongruous with the total house.

(With the growth of unionization in the '30s, precision of color became increasingly difficult, and WTS used to complain, "The first requisite for joining the painters' union is color-blindness.")

The balustrade and stair-rail leading to the third floor of 1 Orchard Lane, in Philippine mahogany of course, present an interesting example of detail: the newel post cap is ornamented with the incised curved line that represents, in Chinese art, the cloud, symbol of peace and rest. In the early Thirties, working in concrete, he used this same detail in moldings, and it is often present as larger curves in the soffits of the College Women's Club.

Also in character with WTS's passion for detail was the fact that he often designed furniture harmonious with the houses he created for his clients; the dining table at 196 Hillcrest Road (1924), now the residence of Fred and Harriet Schmitt, is simple, elegant, and perfectly proportioned for the room. At 1 Orchard

Lane, the newel posts and their caps are echoed in the bedsteads, which he had designed also. (He only revealed to me a year or so before he died--deciding, I imagine, that I was by then old enough to be told--"Well, the form of this finial, like the newel post caps, is a classic Chinese phallic symbol, and the cloud motif on the head and footboards represents peace and rest, as you know.")

A more spectacular use of the cloud motif is at Charles Erskine Scott Wood's magnificent estate, "The Cats," in Los Gatos. ("The Cats" merits a volume to itself; it is unfortunately, at this moment, somewhat difficult of access to outsiders--including the architect's daughter!) At the Wood residence (see exterior photograph by Ansel Adams, 1926), massive roof beams project out widely, terminating in finials shaped in the cloud motif--an impressive translation of the "snake" finials common to so much classic Asian architecture.

On the third and top floor of 1 Orchard Lane is one of its glories: the house is crowned by a breathtakingly exciting tower room. Octagonal, as is the dining room two stories below, all sides are glass, with mirror doors to the east echoing their use in the dining room. The lower part of the windows is a bank of perforated green Chinese tiles; the allover sense of lightness and freedom (and even in the smoggy atmosphere of 1976 the view is spectacular) generates the feeling that one is airborne, not so much by a plane as on a cloud...of peace and rest.

This top floor has also an attic, filled in 1923 with steamer trunks jammed with a treasury of "costumes"--the incredibly heavy beaded capes, wide-brimmed hats trailing aigrettes, and yellowing ruffled petticoats and camisoles, relics from the turn of the century providing magical hours of "dressing up" for little girls.

To the south is a small study for work which inevitably (and for all WTS's life) was brought home; but there is also a darkroom to aid in his passionate pursuit of photography, which was then for him both a diagnostic structural tool and a hobby. (I offer more detail on this pastime elsewhere in the chapter.)

Decks and Detailings

Facing the east is a canvas-covered sun porch, almond-tree shaded, perfect for an afternoon's drowsing in the swing-hammock. "The deck," as we called it, is a feature of style that WTS used repeatedly on an upper story, wishing to restate the blessing of

terraces leading from ground-level rooms. The Schmitt house, just referred to, has a widely outward-bowed one overlooking the canyon below; 101 Panoramic Way is endowed with a flagstone-paved porch perched high in massive oak trees, as is the top floor "deck" of 4 Mosswood Lane. (The last, part of the same family property at 1 Orchard Lane, was one of WTS's '30s experimental works in concrete.) Where there is no space for a "deck," as WTS always called them, there is a balcony: a narrow one runs across the west side of the living room at 101 Panoramic Way, its rail made of several rows of green perforated tiles.

WTS's scrupulous concern for harmonious detail extends to the practicalities of door handles and window fastenings of his own design, gracefully curved forms of bronze made to order from his drawings; so too the lighting fixtures, curled butterflies' tongues in shape, springing from a wall-plate crafted with the cloud-curve. Suspended from the "butterflies' tongues" are, in 1923, Chinese lanterns of mistily colored silk gauze, the fabric firmed and its gold and rusty hues affixed by a spray of fish glue. In 1976, most of these charming globes (which cast, grumbled Mary Effie Ferguson in the '20s, "a dim religious light"), have long since disintegrated, save for their sturdy bent bamboo skeletons. The only miraculous survivors--to my knowledge--hang still in the Schmitt's living room at 196 Hillcrest Road, and they cast a lovely flattering glow.

In the late '20s, WTS was to fasten on another mode of general illumination: the use of Philippine capiz shells, set either in leaded overhead panels, as in his concrete houses, or fashioned into charming little hexagonal lamp shades. During the Depression, when the "deck" at 1 Orchard Lane was converted to a bedroom (as part of creating a comfortable--and rentable--apartment on the top floor), shades were handcrafted, to his design, for that room. The original floor plans for the house, made in 1922, do indeed include the top floor as an intended eventual apartment; this was in character with WTS's conviction that the only honest form of investment for income was rental property.

Whether he or Julia Morgan first actually used capiz shells is a moot point; but I can remember vividly his coming home, one night in the '20s, with a capiz shell window he had found in China-town (the shells had been used in China for inexpensive window-paning, set in small bamboo panels), and his excitement was tremendous. Holding the window up so that electric light could shine through it, he kept exclaiming over the softness of illumination diffused and proclaimed that "these shells make lousy window panes, but I'm going to use them for lighting fixtures." Between WTS and

Julia Morgan there was often cross-pollination of ideas when they were working together, but I am quite positive that this one was his, absorbed by her into her own decorative idiom and subsequently credited to her by present-day historians.

Landscaping

To return to the verbal house tour of 1 Orchard Lane, a stroll around the garden is most meaningful, as WTS invariably designed his own landscaping, even specifying the planting, in tune with the close bond he always wanted between the topography and the building. The path to the front door, for instance, is flanked by a retaining wall to the east: this wall serves not only as one of the number of supports for the many terraces, moving, in Mediterranean manner, up the hilly site, but it offers a surprising delight to the visitor's eye. Drainage holes set at random heights (as mentioned in the interviews, they were formed by architect's mailing tubes for blueprints) are planted with small, delicate creeping plants; Kenilworth ivy, string-of-pearls, needle-leaf ivy (in 1923) spill in informal decoration down the broad surface of the wall.

From the terrace to the west of the living room, curved stairs with wrought-iron rails descend to the terraced garden below; there is a fish pond, set in a crescent-shaped alcove. (Keeping the pond stocked with goldfish was an idea soon abandoned in the '20s, when it became obvious that this charming spot, planted with water lilies, was a source of greater pleasure to our cats than to young human discoverers of pathetic bits of orange tails and fins.)

"The Cats," because of its spectacular hilltop site on a small mountain overlooking the then-fragrantly orcharded Santa Clara Valley, has more dramatically conceived landscaping (partly due to Colonel Wood's greater financial means, of course). The courtyard in back is musical with fountains adorned by commissioned sculpture, and from it a charming little amphitheater climbs up the western slope.

Returning to 1 Orchard Lane, another terrace westward is the lawn, a wide half-moon below a semicircular retaining wall. (For the children, the lawn is the constant locale of amateur theatricals, with "costumes" from the attic.) It is flanked with English yew trees, and echoing that arboreal form, to the south, is a row of Lombardy poplar trees. (In 1976, the poplars are colossal; in

his last years, WTS would say, "To think that when I put these trees in 50 years ago, I carried them up the Orchard Lane stairs, one little ten-inch clump in each hand, and I planted them myself... and now, just look at them!")

His teamwork with nature was an enduring source of joy to him. Another example which delighted him was his design of what we called the "pergola." At the level just above the street, Panoramic Way, is a long brick-paved arbor, sheltered by latticework for the support of wisteria vines. The vertical posts are punctuated by slender horizontal supports, and on each pair of posts the supports are spaced a bit differently. WTS's purpose here was to offer each wisteria vine, rooted below, its own pattern of twisting growth and thus to add also the visual pleasure of variety. During one of his last years, he showed me this with pride; the concept was absorbed from his delight in the garden arts of Japan--but rather than a total translation of bonsai where the tree is bent to man's will in order to create an essentially human art form, his intent was a friendly and informal collaboration between kindred living things--the wisteria vine and himself. The collaboration worked.

The Other Orchard Lane Houses

There are two other houses on the Panoramic Hill property: below 1 Orchard Lane is the cottage at 1 Panoramic Way, which WTS designed for himself and Elizabeth to live in while the large house was under construction, and at the eastern boundary of the garden is 4 Mosswood Lane, constructed both as an experiment in concrete and as a rental unit, during the Depression.

1 Panoramic sums up WTS's early style in frame construction--it is of redwood, its living room friendly and spacious with a high beamed ceiling. Dutch doors open onto the "pergola" (which terminates in a redwood playhouse, built for the children), and first cousins to this house are 38 Panoramic Way and the residence he designed for Marion Parsons at 29 Mosswood Road. 4 Mosswood Lane, referred to earlier, is a microcosm of a larger house in the same construction at 101 Panoramic Way.

Because the concrete houses (another is at 10 Mosswood Road) relate so intimately to WTS's shift of field from design to structure, I have described them elsewhere in this memoir. However, the living room at 101 Panoramic deserves special mention

here, as it has that special quality--a combination of freedom, lightness, and lovely proportion with a warm atmosphere of welcoming. During the 16 years I lived at 101 Panoramic, I never entered the house without a gasp of delight at the soaring barrel vault of the ceiling, the unexpected lunette to the east, the wide windows gathering in the Bay view, framed by massive oaks, and the spacious tile-adorned hearth.

Every one of the houses WTS designed gives the accustomed dweller as well as the visitor this sense of welcome. To paraphrase--positively--Dante's gloomy admonition, the lintels of WTS's living rooms might well be inscribed, "Take heart, all ye who enter here."

IX THE DEPRESSION

But although 1 Orchard Lane was the embodiment of all of WTS's design features in the '20s, it lacked one significant concept, one which was to possess his mind and imagination for the rest of his life. This was permanence. Or--given the uncannily organic responses to the elements of such robust inorganic materials as stone, steel, and concrete--the closest possible approximation to permanence in a building.

This goal of permanence was, in one sense, a revival of the medieval dream he had cherished when he returned from Europe in 1914. (See p.48 in the interviews.) In another very personal way, it may have been a quest for the virtues of near-permanence, stability, endurance, and security which had been dealt brutal blows in the field of architecture, both in its physical manifestations and in the practice itself, by the economic disasters of the '30s.

The 19th century with its elegance, its romantic Lebensraum for unreined creativity expressed in superlative craftsmanship, had at last pranced to the end of its spirited course. It had trotted stylishly--as the arts so often do--a good decade past the global and political convulsions of World War II. Creative man does not walk always in step with his century, and certainly the arts tend to move with laggard steps into the spirit of a new age. Viewed in historical perspective, the phenomenon of cultural lag is meaningless: excellence is excellence, no matter whether it was à la mode in its decade.

WTS had vociferously strong views on this, on the condemnation of excellence which was not stylishly modern. "They say it's not 'contemporary,'" he often roared. "Contemporary--with what?" ("Roar" is used here advisedly. When WTS was irked on a matter of principle, his vocal volume expanded considerably. One night at dinner, when he was railing against some current political chicanery, my sister, then about ten and already showing the quick

humor she had inherited from him, remarked quietly, "Father, would you please lower your voice to a loud bellow?")

The period of the Depression is minimized in the interviews as, in his mind, this appears to have been the only period of his life which he did not recall with realism and vivid clarity. It was a brutal time for architects and for the building trades: the small architectural firms suffered the fate which many are now suffering. They simply went under. The large firms got what work there was--the large non-residential contracts--and they kept going. (The shaky economy of 1975-76 is causing a recurrence of this.) The large firms WTS referred to as "plan mills" and had rather a voluble contempt for them.

Referring to the monastery job, WTS speaks of "not knowing there was a Depression." This was a merciful forgetting of a terrible period in his life. I can remember him sunk in a depression of his own, that long Scandinavian face drawn in despair, prior to the monastery assignment. Everything in his life heretofore had proved the axiom on which he was raised: that talent combined with hard work led to success, and suddenly this was no longer true. We were in financial straits. My step-grandmother, whom I adored, went to live in Europe, as her meager funds went farther in the modest pensions there; I was sent along to keep her company, as I had lived on the Continent several years before and felt completely at home abroad. What bailed WTS out both financially and emotionally in 1931 was a millionaire's caprice, the importation of a Spanish monastery, and that project symbolized his turning to structural consulting which was, indeed, still sufficiently in demand in the early Thirties where there were still those large contracts.

Structural Design

With the Depression and the appalling mortality in residential construction, he moved, after the monastery project, quite rapidly into his second great field, structure, which was still marketable.

Despite his disclaimers elsewhere in this volume about his own research, he did indeed do very original research in the uses of concrete in earthquake-proof and fire-resistant construction, both at UC and as a consultant for industrial firms. He designed a half-dozen experimental houses in concrete, and in this medium he became an international figure among architects, with vast knowledge about the material; there are numerous scholarly papers, articles, and lectures on concrete to his credit.

Permanent Construction

101 Panoramic Way and 4 Mosswood Lane, described earlier, are resolutely sturdy examples of his quest for permanence in construction. Of concrete gunite on steel lath, with pigment wiped into the interior walls when they were still wet, these houses are unbelievably practical and almost totally maintenance-free. Floors of pigmented concrete, tile, or flagstone need only be mopped; windows, with steel sashes (and handles of his own design, of course), never warp. It was an expensive form of construction, but over the long run, cheap--a broken window, thanks to a small boy's baseball, was virtually the only repair needed. (My sister and I both lived in concrete houses of WTS's design, with our small children; they are child-proof, pet-proof, and even, for the adults, party-proof.) They are graced with the touches typical of his style; although Mediterranean in quality, with tile roofs, the proportions, the openness to the outdoors, the imaginative fenestration, and the use of Chinese tiles as well as individually designed and crafted interior tile, mark them as coming from WTS's drawing board.

When I asked him once about the degree of fire-and-earthquake-proofness of 101 Panoramic, which my husband and I had bought, he explained, "Concrete isn't truly fire-proof--it's just as fire-resistant as I can make it. But your house is earthquake-proof, in the sense that it won't shake down. It might roll down the hill, but it would stay all in one piece." (He could never resist tempering serious statements with humor.)

It was a very practical move, this shift away from his own design and into structure for others; but it was more than that, it suited his temperament. In changing to structure, WTS could be every bit as uncompromising as he wished. There is no argument against the stern dicta of steel and concrete, of pressures and stresses.

Also, he had been an expensive architectural designer, and conflicts sometimes occurred between him and his clients on costs, although he never overcharged for his own services, considering himself, as he did, a medieval architect. But in spite of minor pulls and hauls between himself and a client, the two--who became good friends almost instantly--always remained friends thereafter. And although the client might in later years curse a little over the fact that there was not a single standard size window or door in his house, he respected WTS's integrity and perhaps only later realized that, for instance, the graceful high windows, a parade

of arches, the wide doorways, were part of what created the atmosphere and the spirit of his home and what made it his own totally individual castle.

What WTS never knew about himself was that although he came to consider himself "difficult" in his lack of willingness to compromise, his native and totally unconscious charm was enormous; if he had known this about himself it is possible that he could, in later years, have designed a Chinese-roofed silo as a residence and the client would, after a few feeble protests, have capitulated--and loved it.

As I am completely unequipped to write about his work in structure, I must refer the reader to his mountain of technical writings and papers now in the architectural archives [Archives of the College of Environmental Design, UC]. I do have an insight into the several reasons--often a puzzlement to those who did not know him very well--why the designer turned engineer, and why residential design never beckoned him back.

X CHANGE OF FIELD

From Design to Structure

Once the Depression had abated and World War II was over, perhaps the strongest force in WTS's decision to remain in structural engineering rather than returning to design was the new wave in architecture, generated in Europe in the '20s and finally engulfing America in the '30s. One could not say that he marched to a different drummer (his independent stride would never submit to any march) but rather, that he heard another siren song, a gentler melody. His Odyssey as a designer would quite possibly have foundered on the sharply angled crags of the new Bauhaus-inspired design. He intuitively felt this, I think, and so he changed course.

Just as significant in his following a second career was another shoal: the building trades themselves. The European and Asian craftsmen with whom he had worked, in mutual affection and respect, were mostly gone. It was nearly impossible to find a carpenter capable of paneling a ceiling with cabinetmaker's precision, or a ceramist with an artist's eye for flawless tiles in various mutations of azure, burnt umber, or celadon. And if such craftsmen were to be found, only the rare and extremely wealthy client (such as Hearst, at San Simeon, or Getty, in a later year, at Pacific Palisades) could afford to import them from Europe. The last ghosts of the Renaissance guilds were fading away.

Public taste, too, for severe simplicity was aided and abetted by the sheer economic realities of the decade, strong unionization of the building trades and costly materials both contributing to the expense of building. Sometimes, however, the economy of simplicity and mass-production was a false one. Once, upon seeing a new commercial building in San Francisco on which the only decorative detailing was a large screen of rubber-stamp repetitive, pre-cast interlocking circles, WTS roared, "Why on earth

didn't they give a good sculptor the job? It just makes me wild--that pre-cast junk is expensive, and commissioning a real live sculptor wouldn't have cost that much more. They could have given the poor S.O.B. the work he deserves and needs, and if they'd hired one, that building would have come alive. It's not a bad building, but this way it's dead."

In the interviews he complains about Maybeck's pre-cast concrete decorative neo-Grecian acanthus leaves on the capitals of Hearst Gymnasium, on the UC campus, and he felt the same about the pre-cast neo-Gothic trefoils abounding on Julia Morgan's Berkeley City Club. Both Maybeck and Morgan were by then willing to bend a little to the realities of the time: UC wanted a Greek revival; the City Club wanted a Gothic reminiscence.

WTS would not have bent. I heard him say often that he would have commissioned good sculptors to do the detail on buildings or else have left it off completely. Moreover, he would have refused to copy wholesale the ornaments of other eras but would have borrowed design elements from other ages, other lands, and fused them as he did in the College Women's Club. (He describes his handling of the colonnade there in the interviews.)

The New Wave

Public change in architectural taste affected, starting in the '30s, many Bay Area owners of older houses. To most laymen, natural wood presented with affection and understanding, built-in detail, and even subtle or muted use of color became unacceptable. In Berkeley alone, owners or buyers of houses built in the '20s and earlier drowned golden oak doors and inundated redwood beamed ceilings in a flood of white paint. (I'd guess that at no time in the paint industry was more "flat white" sold.) Parquet floors were smothered in wall-to-wall carpeting, even mullions were knocked out and supplanted by "something less fussy"--a single sterile sheet of plate glass. Now clients wanted the austere and the angular in which to house their "Danish modern" furniture, and Fraser's on Telegraph Avenue was the fashionable place to buy it, with many a Berkeley dining and living room becoming a little Fraser's-away-from-Fraser's.

WTS had never designed with austerity and angularity (and he loathed what he called "dead" white paint), and he would not have altered his ethics of style, under any circumstances. It was a matter of his own artistic integrity, with which he refused to compromise or even lightly bargain. And it was not only on issues of craftsmanship, quality, and detail that he stood apart from many of his colleagues and most of the public: design, at its most basic level. A frequent remark of his, similarly stated in the interviews, is illustrative:

"There are two kinds of architects: those who design from the outside in--and that looks great on the drawing board--and those who design from the inside out. That's the way I designed--and so did Julia Morgan and Mr. Maybeck and Harry Gutterson," enumerating some of his co-believers in this concept. But while "Form follows function" and "A house is a machine for living" were dicta dropped at many a dinner party of the '30s, WTS considered that far too often exterior design dominated much of the architectural planning of the period, and that many a house which looked stunningly functional in the rendering presented the enchanted client, after it was built turned out to be a rather creaky machine for human habitation.

I remember a house designed by an internationally famous architect, for whom WTS did the structural engineering. It was certainly glorious on the drawing board: perched on the side of a cliff, it seemed about to become air-borne. "It's handsome," he said, "but it's a flying chicken coop. It's going to take a hell of a lot of engineering to make it stay on that slope. What's more," he added, "the first thing you'll see when you come in the front door is the toilet--because the bathroom door is directly opposite the front door. And some kid is always going to leave that bathroom door open."

Design which placed exterior drama before interior beauty, comfort, and convenience irritated him, and he privately branded those who practiced it with the scorching epithet, "architectural milliners." Granted, in some ways he was a reactionary; but very often what seemed an emotional knee-jerk response to the new wave turned out to be in fact a very well reasoned judgement.

Frank Lloyd Wright

In the case of Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance, WTS admired the elegance of much of his design but considered too many of his residences, in particular, to be badly flawed in a basic element: scale. "Put a model of one of Wright's houses--say, that one toward "the point" in Carmel--on a coffee table," he said to me recently. "It would be a lovely little piece of sculpture. But full-size, it's out of scale with the people who have to live in it. It's almost as if children had crawled into a dolls' house."

His really strong feeling against Wright was, however, in the latter's self-promoting proclivities, and when one of Wright's Olympian dicta would appear in the Forum, the Record, or the daily press, he would snort, "I see Rank Floyd Fright's at it again." (He forgot that some of his own dicta were rather Olympian in character, too.)

...and Buckminster Fuller

Wright became almost a symbolic figure to him, the archetype of the "star" architect, and Buckminster Fuller ran a close second. (Once at a lecture given by Fuller which WTS attended, he was enchanted at this incident: another senior local architect, much of WTS's turn of mind, showed up in the lecture hall thoroughly drunk; halfway through Fuller's exposition of his latest newsworthy theory, this soggy listener struggled to his feet, proclaimed loudly, "F--- Mister Buller!" and staggered out.)

It was his strongest bias against not only Wright, Buckminster Fuller, and other innovators that they were "good copy" and availed themselves of the increasingly rich resources of the media, both print and air, to promote their ideas. For prior to the '30s, architects and architecture had not been "good copy" in America (although they had long been in Europe) to the media or to the public taste, which commanded the media's always-sensitive response.

An architect's work itself should be its and its creator's only advertisement, according to WTS's book of ethics; and certainly this Emersonian mousetrap concept worked very well indeed for him in both of his careers. In the '20s, people saw his houses, loved them, and they did beat a path to his door; once he had fully moved into structure in the '30s, other architects, and industry as well,

sought him out as a consultant, and his hands were never idle nor were his pockets ever empty. During his second career, he was an architect's architect, well known and greatly respected for his extraordinary expertise--but by then he had become nearly forgotten, by the general public, for the achievements of his first career. In fact, false attributions abound: I have often heard second or third owners of houses he designed in the '20s say proudly, "It's a Maybeck, you know," or, "This is a Julia Morgan, of course," when in truth, anyone sensitive to style could not confuse his stamp with either of theirs.

Challenges

In his engineering career, it was a pleasure for him to do the structure on buildings for architects whose commissions allowed for as much quality of material and detail as was financially practical. And it was for that reason that he particularly enjoyed working with his great friend Gardner Dailey, who, incidentally, was totally generous in giving credit. WTS derived as much joy in ingeniously floating the Surfrider Hotel, in Honolulu, on temperamental layers of sand, lava, and coral, and later in firmly subduing tons of pressure where Strawberry Creek runs under Morrison Music Building and Hertz Hall on the UC campus, as he would have had he designed those buildings himself.

He felt also, at that time and later, that glamorous commissions were more likely to fall to architects who, as he said before, were "willing to play the social game," and he considered himself somewhat too outspoken and iconoclastic to pursue this side of architectural practice. His life style and Elizabeth's together had changed totally by then and it was centered wholly on the work each one had and loved. (Those sparkling parties at 1 Orchard Lane were history.) She, too, was in another manner almost disconcertingly direct, and in any event she was deeply absorbed from 1931 onward in her own work in psychology and psychiatry.

The very integrity which made him unwilling to "play the social game" or indulge in self-promotion was one of the qualities which endeared his new course, with its many welcoming harbors, to him. While concrete and steel have wills of their own, there is no compromising with them in the realities of structural engineering. "Euclid alone..." brought him both joy and honor in his second career.

The Return to Older Values

Part of the irony of WTS's life-span's bridging two vastly different architectural eras and sets of values is the back-swing, now in the '70s, to hand-craftsmanship, respect for materials--such as wood, stone, or glass--and hunger for detail which is intrinsic (or even irrelevant). Even tenants of old residences are now frantically stripping down wood, uncovering and refinishing parquet floors, hunting for orphaned stained-glass windows from demolished churches. The public has pulled the once-accepted fig leaf of "old-fashioned" from the vitality of an earlier aesthetic, even giving honor to some of the worst of "Victorian millwork excrescences" (as WTS called them) with painted accentuation. Now again, people want to live in rooms which enfold them in the warmth of fine proportion, sensitive detail, contrasting textures, and subtle colors: the domestic architecture of the first third of this century has become nearly revered.

It is sad, for purposes of this chronicle, that WTS died before the era of his own designing could be discussed in depth in the taped interviews. Shortly before the fatal accident, he told me that he was eager, in the interviews, to get to this subject--characteristically, not so much for personal recognition, but so that young architects and architecture students might learn from it. It was to this end--the gift of his own particular areas of knowledge and wisdom--that he donated all his plans and drawings to UC Berkeley's architectural archive (to be lodged, he hoped, in the Architecture Library which he had designed, by the way), telling me, "I want them used, studied, learned from--and even worn out."

During his last years, young people in architecture came to visit and talk with him almost daily, and now, since his death, there is an increasing awareness by the public of his work as a designer. For although he abhorred self-promotion and was often maddeningly modest, he held nothing whatever against deserved recognition for worthy achievement--and this included his own. He had thoroughly enjoyed his popularity in the '20s and would have taken equal pleasure in the public acclaim which is beginning to again adorn his name posthumously.

Older clients who had known his work in the '20s did, in fact, again seek him out with requests for residential work after World War II with the post-war prosperity, but he refused commissions for design. He had changed course and would not

turn back. It was a satisfying new voyage for him, and "the wind was fair."

But recently, while going over, with my old friend Katharine Caldwell*, Ansel Adams' photographs of "The Cats," taken just after its construction in 1926, I was first exhilarated, then greatly saddened. The sure command of mass, the strong yet sensuous style, the easy liveability enriched by detail which was exquisite, yet intrinsic to the whole--what a gloriously soaring creative imagination WTS had! (It was matched, I feel, only by that of Maybeck.)

The emotional conviction in me keeps growing that had WTS been born a scant quarter of a century earlier, had he been a contemporary in age with Bernard Maybeck, the flowering of his genius as a designer would not have been abruptly cut down by the economic scythes of the Depression and World War II or dried up by what seemed to him the chill northern winds of the Bauhaus' architectural revolution. The tragedy for the field of architectural design was that WTS's life spanned two eras, and in the thinner air of that second era, his winged imagination could not truly take flight.

No sooner had I completed this section on WTS's change of field than I came upon another box of his papers--and in it the introduction to a lecture which he delivered at the request of William Wilson Wurster, the late dean of the College of Architecture (and another old friend), around 1950. As his manuscript propounds WTS's convictions about both the necessity and the joy of structural design, I offer it here for the reader's delectation.

*Mrs. Caldwell is the widow of James R. Caldwell of UC's English Department, herself now a retired professor of Asian art at Mills College, and daughter of Sara Bard Field (Mrs. C.E.S. Wood).

A Lecture to Students, by WTS

Dean Wurster has asked me to give two lectures which might contribute something to your "insight into the part played by engineering in the architectural world." That is a large order,--and in so brief a time I can offer only a glimpse of the structural aspect of architecture; not with any intention of informing you, but rather in the hope of arousing your interest. I would have preferred to present this subject almost entirely with photographs, drawings, slides, and models; but there has not been time to assemble and organize the material, and I shall be obliged to do a lot of talking. However, there are quite a few slides so that those whose interest I fail to hold can rest quietly in the darkened room. Please note that I am speaking as an individual and that this college is in no way responsible for any of my statements.

Most of you are beginners in architecture. Within a year some of you may have decided that architecture is not for you;--or the University may have decided that some of you are not for architecture. Don't let either of these uncertainties worry you. This is a very broad profession; whatever you learn in this school will not be lost and will probably be valuable in your ultimate calling,--matrimony for example. The breadth of this profession is indicated by the Roman Vitruvius's definition of the essentials of architecture,--utility, stability and beauty; or in present day art critics' language,--function, structure, and form. The fulfillment of these requirements demands a diversity of talents on the part of the Architect; or considered in another way it offers several kinds of opportunity. There is yet another talent which Vitruvius mentions in his great book of nearly 2,000 years ago. He tells of a Greek Architect, one Apolodorous, who knew little about his profession as such, but who was a good salesman. Unable to get an audience with Alexander the Great, Apolodorous dressed himself up as Hercules and then he paraded back and forth near the tent of the World Conqueror. Alexander ordered the guards to drag in this queer character; when Apolodorous left the tent he had a commission to build

a city. There are business men in the profession today just as there were in ancient times; and those of you who have such sales genius will not need to worry about your skill in planning, your knowledge of structure or your taste in design. You can hire men to do these jobs for you; but you must know enough about the work to know what they,--and you, are talking about. You must know that when a carpenter refers to a stud he is speaking of a wooden upright,--not a horse engaged in multiplication.

Today building has become so complex that many architects are obliged to delegate their mechanical and structural work to engineers. In consequence very few American architects put any more effort in engineering studies than is required to get the State Certificate to practice; and that they promptly forget through disuse. Most of you who become architects will probably follow this pattern; and in this pattern you can gain fame, if not fortune; for in much of the work considered best today there is little evidence of a serious effort to apply modern structural design to modern architecture. In this situation there is great opportunity for the young architect-to-be; but in order to avail himself of the opportunity he must understand the idiomatic uses of materials, the possibilities of modern structural elements. In brief, he must have something more under his hat or on his bookshelves than formulas or spectacular and impractical tricks of construction; he must know how to put a building together. For the past several centuries the architect's professional education began with the study of the classic orders,--Doric, Ionic and Corinthian,--sometimes including both Greek and Roman variants of these styles. No doubt the study of these classic forms was excellent training in proportion; but the modern architect who would express himself in terms of our time must also master the "structural orders"; by which I mean the beam and post, the arch, the truss, and the rigid frame,--and their variants in different present day materials. He must also have the courage of conviction, for the dictates of present day building fashions are just as intolerant as the styles of forty years

ago which insisted that steel or concrete frames be masked with imitations of classic or mediæval architecture.

Every building is promptly subjected to the destructive forces of nature;—some of these it must resist in the process of construction. The primary problem of the constructor is the meeting of the force of gravity, especially as it may affect the spanning of wall openings and room spaces; and when this constant downward pull is carried over openings and into supports and down to the ground the builder must be sure that the soil can withstand the downward pressures. There are intermittent, or occasional, forms of destruction in special effects of gravity;—landslides and earth pressure, earthquakes, wave and stream action. The atmosphere attacks a building by means of windstorms, rain, fog, ice, lightning, industrial fumes, extremes of heat and cold, extremes of dryness and moisture. Most of the building materials have within their chemical and physical composition the agencies of self destruction which become active under certain conditions. There are biological attacks in the form of fungus, termites, beetles, and rodents,—not to mention man himself. Destructive enough is the savagery of war; but far worse are the ravages which buildings suffer in peace time; from fires and from obsolescence,— We have not yet paid much attention to the shielding of buildings from war damage, but fire protection has had much to do with the outer form of our large structures. The fact that many a building is torn down before it has been used for a fraction of its physical life must be considered in our selection of structures *Types*.

You have all witnessed the coming of television, jet propulsion, and atomic fission; and you know how these developments of the last decade have changed our lives,—our hopes and our fears for the future. The brilliance of these achievements in communication, transportation, and power production have so highlighted the news that there has been relatively little interest in the less spectacular advances of the arts of building. For about 160 years, ever since the

invention of the steam engine initiated the harnessing of the great forces of nature, there has been a growing appreciation of mechanical contrivances and the magic of chemistry with a corresponding declining interest in the quieter techniques of construction. Everyone realizes that steam navigation, the railroads, and the automobile, the telephone, telegraph and radio, electric lighting, photography and production line manufacturing have made such profound changes in the world that the descriptions of life in the late years of the 18th century might have been written about conditions on another planet of another sun. But very few realize,—despite the evidence of many great bridges and skyscrapers, that during these same 160 years there has been a parallel revolution in the methods of building construction. Just during the last 60 years within my own memory two entirely new methods of building construction,—steel frame and reinforced concrete have come into general use. Either of these can be regarded as having more potential significance on the development of architecture than anything which has happened since the brick arch was devised,—as a means of spanning large spaces with small units, about 4,000 or 5,000 B. C. In order to compete with these new materials the traditional timber and masonry constructions have been modified more in the last half century than in many centuries preceding.

In these two discussions I shall endeavor to first show you by means of lantern slides the effects of various kinds of attack to which a building is subject; following this with a brief review of the fundamental structural methods and the recent developments of these methods due to the introduction of new materials. This will not make you structural engineers in two easy lessons, but it may arouse the interest of some of you in this much neglected aspect of architecture; in which I believe is the greatest opportunity in architecture for your generation.

XI THE MONASTERY

The Spanish Monastery

WTS's part in the history of Santa Maria de Ovila is best described in his own words--first, in the formal portion of a speech he delivered at the San Francisco Museum of Art in the fall of 1941, and second, in a letter he wrote to Julia Morgan from Madrid, while he was on the site of the monastery.

The materials pertaining to the monastery are, at this writing, in three separate repositories: WTS's working drawings mainly are divided between the deYoung Museum and UC's architectural archive, as is some of his correspondence. Most of the correspondence is still among the effects of the recently deceased (around May 1, two weeks before this writing) Ed Hussey, who had taken on the sorting of these papers and also the cataloguing of WTS's residential designs as a labor of love. These materials will be made available to the public, of course, as soon as the Hussey family is able, with its presently heavy burdens, to turn them over to me.

I am including, however, Ed's brief chronicle of what happened to the stones, in an abstract from WTS's correspondence. Included also is a letter of WTS's to Charles Griffith, then San Francisco City Architect, pertaining to the salvage of the burned stones.

The Choice: Medieval Architecture or Asian Art?

One element in the history of the monastery is missing from Ed Hussey's synopsis. (The date can easily be pinpointed by the deYoung Museum.) Walter Heil, then director of the Museum and a

close friend of WTS's, the Museum's Board, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors were presented with a tremendously difficult decision: Avery Brundage had offered his magnificent Asian art collection to the deYoung, and the choice was either acceptance and housing of that collection or reconstruction of the monastery. All, even WTS, felt regretfully that with San Francisco's strong rapport with Asia--stronger than its sympathy with medieval Europe--it would be easier to raise the supplementary funds for installation of the Brundage Collection. WTS concurred that this reasoning was sound; amazingly he felt little bitterness at the loss of a project which was very dear to him, and he was also, in time, philosophical in accepting the brutal fact of the massive destruction of a great portion of the stones by fire, in later years.

This was typical of his adjustment to adversity. If nothing could be done about a great disappointment in life, one might as well forget it and move forward but still remember the positive and happy elements which had obtained before. The challenge of dismantling the monastery buildings, the labeling of the stones, stone-by-stone, fan-vault-by-fan-vault, directions for the re-erection of the three buildings, his exquisitely precise drawings, the happy rapport with the Spanish workmen--all this combined experience was remembered by him with delight.

Nevertheless, there was still a tinge of sorrow in his voice when people asked him in recent years, after all those fires and after the terrible cracking and destruction of the stones, "Is there any chance that even part of the monastery can be reconstructed?" And he answered, "Yes, there is a larger percent of that monastery that can be reconstructed than there was to work with in the reconstruction of medieval buildings in The Cloisters in New York City."

WTS told an amusing story about the profligate Mr. Hearst in this context. Once when WTS was working in Spain on the monastery project he invited the Spanish foreman he had been closest to and Arthur Byne, the archaeologist and art dealer who had found the monastery for Hearst, to dinner, and according to the expected courtesy on the Continent, he had included a bottle of wine. All expenditures were, of course, strictly recorded as part of the expense account; Hearst questioned, subsequently, the extravagance of a single bottle of wine!

WTS lectured several times on the monastery: I offer here the carbon copy of that which he delivered at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1941. What is recorded is his introduction, which was followed by motion pictures he took on the site, and his handwritten conclusion to the evening. The lecture was given at the request of Charles Lindstrom, curator of the Museum.

A Lecture at the San
Francisco Museum of Art,
Fall, 1941

WALTER T. STEILBERG
CONSULTING ARCHITECT
No. 1 ORCHARD LANE
BERKELEY (4), CALIF.
THORNHILL 3-1780

Date ? 314
Lecture Wed. evening Sept. 24, 1941

Among those who remain for the duration of this lecture, there may be some who will feel that they have been lured here by false promises. When Mr. Lindstrom invited me to speak on the subject of San Francisco's recent acquisition of Spanish medieval architecture, he asked that I designate the title of my talk. In a facetious mood, I proposed the rather flippant designation, "MOVING A MONASTERY FROM SPAIN TO SAN FRANCISCO". I did not get around to writing a more fitting title, so that's the way it went out in the museum bulletin.

Now, I have no intention of dwelling upon the very unusual or sensational,-- what some have even called the fantastic, aspects of this job of transporting thousands of pieces of masonry from a little mountain valley in Castile to an eucalyptus grove in Golden Gate Park. Certainly it was a difficult undertaking, but no more difficult than many a piece of construction which you see in progress about the bay every year. Perhaps this was one of the most ambitious house-moving jobs in history; but the only significance which an account of it may have in tonight's lecture is to possibly increase public appreciation of the value of the material which was moved here. For the real purpose of this talk is to give a preview of one of the greatest art treasures which has ever come into the possession of any American city. With that purpose in mind, I propose:

- I.- To remind you of the contribution of monasticism to western European culture.
- II.- To review briefly the magnificent part which the Spanish people played in European history during the eight centuries this monastery was in building and in use.
- III.- To describe and picture the country in which this monastery was located.
- IV.- To describe and picture, albeit most inadequately, the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila, as it once was, and in its ruinous condition in 1931.
- V.- To show, principally by a 10-minute motion picture, the process of taking down the masonry, vaults, arches and walls and shipping the material to California.

VI.- To indicate the part which this work of art, when reassembled, may play in the culture and life of our city.

Quoting freely from Cummings' "Architecture in Italy" and from Montalembert's "The Monks of the West,":

"During the dismal centuries which followed the downfall of the Roman Empire, the monasteries seem to have afforded the only havens of quiet and peaceful life in the midst of the universal flood of savage barbarism under which ancient civilization had gone down. However, if we look closely, there are indications in the general history of the time that the spirit of humanity was not altogether extinct. There was then in spite of the uninterrupted prevalence of war in its most brutal and cruel form, such a thing as civil life and some regard for the decencies of existence. To foster these better tendencies,- to keep alive in the general darkness a faint light of an almost extinct civilization,- was the work of the monasteries.

"The rule of Benedict, who was chiefly the founder of western Christian monasticism in the sixth century, shows us very clearly that the life of the monk in the cloister was not wholly that of the recluse who, on retiring from the world, withdraws from it the activity and the useful work of which he is capable. Article after article of the Benedictine rule inculcates the duty of labor, "Laborare est orare",- to labor is to pray. To every hour of the day is assigned its own duty. Much of the labor was doubtless of an humble sort which served the daily common needs of the community, but apart from these duties, a large portion of the time and energy of the monks was given to the work of education. Few persons realize in our day the extent to which this work was carried by the monks in the Middle Ages. As regards both the useful and the liberal arts, the monasteries filled, through all the centuries which preceded the revival of learning, the place of the universities. In every monastery there was established first a library, then great studios, where, to increase the number of books, skillful calligraphers transcribed manuscripts; and, finally, schools open to all who had need or desire for instruction. Public



instruction was almost entirely centered in the cloister and was thence abundantly distributed to all who claimed it; thither gathered a crowd of students from all ranks and from all countries."

The advantages of this instruction were not limited to those intending to become monks or to enter the service of the church, but were open to laymen with equal freedom. The same may be said of the convents of women where schools were maintained in which were trained not only the future novices but also numbers of young girls destined for the life of courts or the world. Neither were the monasteries merely conservatories and teachers of the classics of literature; choral music which is at last recognized as among the world's greatest, was written in the monasteries and its singing was a part of the daily life; there were schools of agriculture, road making and the draining of marches, - of handicrafts, such as book binding, of philosophy, government and civil law, and, finally, of art. Among these branches of the arts, the most serious and productive study was given to that which includes all the rest, namely architecture. For eight centuries the practice of this art was carried on by the monks, by whom very many of the conventual and ecclesiastical buildings of the middle ages all over Europe down to the 13th century were not only designed but executed, for the monks were not only architects but masons and executed their own designs generally without the aid of stranger workmen.

The monasteries, notwithstanding their sacred character, and the services which they rendered to all classes of the people, were by no means exempt from the dangers of the stormy times in which they existed. Especially was this true of the monasteries in Central Spain which for centuries served as outposts of Christianity, during its centuries of conflict with the Mohammedans of Southern Spain. Both on account of the generally secluded position of the monastery and on account of the danger of invasion and siege it was important that the institution should contain within its walls all that was needful for the support of its inhabitants. The monastery thus became a veritable religious city embracing gardens, mills, bakeries.

wineries, stables, workshops of various sorts and everything needful for the domestic economy of a great establishment. The Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila, which is our special subject this evening, was a comparatively medium sized institution, probably housing at no time more than several hundred monks, but it was a remarkably representative example, - in its location, in its general plan, and in its century-by-century development of the several phases of medieval ecclesiastical architecture.

The monasteries from modest beginnings grew gradually rich; the temporal powers conceded ample territory around them, on which under their protecting wings, villages grew up hoping for a measure of safety. The great feudal barons hoping to save their souls made gifts of castles and lands; rich men and princes tired of vanity and strife, came to end their days in the peace of the cloister and, dying, bequeathed their possessions to the monasteries. The increase of wealth brings with it political influence. The abbots became powerful lords, making war like secular barons. The original impulse of simple piety was lost and ambition and pride came in to take its place. The accumulation of wealth in the monasteries, and the growth in them of the spirit of luxury and worldly ambition, effected a radical change in the life of these institutions and in their relations to the outside world and prepared the way for their abolition. The monastery was an institution whose usefulness depended on and arose out of the conditions of medieval life. The suppression of the monasteries in all the Catholic countries of western Europe which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century, was but the inevitable result of the progress of the modern spirit. The magnitude of the undertaking, as well as the unanimity of feeling which compelled the various governments to the step is the best evidence to its necessity. In 1835 Spain abolished 900 monasteries at a single stroke; the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila was one of these.

Having reviewed the general subject of the monasteries of western Europe, I would now like to consider as the second part of the background of my subject, the broad outlines of Spanish history, especially that of the Middle Ages.

Spain, like every other country of Europe, was a melting pot of races long before our country could lay claim to the title. At the dawn of history, say 33,000 years B.C., Spain was inhabited by the Iberians, a Celtic race very like the Irish. Later there was an Aryan infusion in the Greek colonies along the Mediterranean shore. Then the country was conquered by the Carthagenians, a Semitic race. After the destruction of Carthage, Spain became a Roman colony, and early in the Christian era was supposed to have had a population of 40,000,000,—about twice as great as the present one. The presence of mighty Roman aqueducts and bridges high up in the mountains of central and western Spain, as well as the fact that Spanish is closer to the Latin than any other modern language, gives evidence of the importance of Spain in the ancient empire. When the empire collapsed in the fifth century, the barbarians who swept down on Spain from the north were Teutonic tribes much like those which invaded Italy, France and England. Then in the eighth century the tide of conquest turned and the Mohammedan hosts coming up from Africa conquered all of Spain and were only stopped a few miles from Paris. Little by little the Christianized barbarians drove them back until at the beginning of the ninth century the Christians had crossed the Pyrenees and had a strong foothold in the northern part of the Iberian peninsula.

The medieval history of Spain is largely the story of the struggle between the northern Christian kingdoms, Leon, Castile, Navarre and Aragon, and the Mohammedan emirates to the south. The general movement of the crusades naturally added to the determination of the Christians to drive the infidels out of Spain and served to give a degree of unity to the efforts of the separate kingdoms which would not otherwise have been possible in those days of rugged individualism. Not until the last quarter of the fifteenth century,—shortly before Columbus discovered America, was the Mohammedan power finally crushed. Thus for more than seven centuries, the

Spanish people were indeed the Protectors of the Faith. A great historian has said that but for the victory of Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours, the crescent instead of the cross might now crown the towers of London and Paris. The fruits of that victory were many times endangered in the following centuries and were only saved by the enduring courage of the Castilians and Aragonese.

As these crude maps indicate, the little monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila was in the very heart of all this history-making. Note that in 1189 in the early life in the monastery, the Mohammedans were hardly 50 miles away to the southwest. About the same distance to the west was the boundary of another kingdom, and neighboring Christian countries in those days, even as in our own time, were not above a little raiding now and then. While these maps show boundaries, such lines were probably most indefinite and were respected only in the degree of the strength of their defenders. Today's blitzkreig is merely a gasoline version of the war strategy of the middle ages. A monastery like this one could expect a Moslem or a fellow-Christian raid at almost any time and in consequence it acquired a fortress character in its exterior expression. Nevertheless it was in these centuries of danger and hardship that the monastery acquired the best of its architecture. With the establishment of a larger degree of law and order through the union of Castile and Aragon, a certain deterioration of the virile spirit of the place becomes evident and the later work, although graceful and beautiful, lacks the power and dignity of the twelfth and thirteenth century buildings.

We have considered the influences of culture and creed, of race and history,—the human factors which shaped this monastery. Let us now look for a moment at the physical factors; the country around it, the climate, the usual building materials, and the site of the group.

All of this central part of Spain is a sort of rugged plateau, about 2,000 ft. high, ribbed with mountains, and grooved with small valleys and a few swift flowing rivers. The climate has been aptly described as consisting of 9 months of winter and 3 months of hell. Otherwise, much of the country is not unlike our own

central California coastal region, especially that around Monterey; the very vegetation is similar, consisting of a mixture of small pines and live oaks. It is said that Spain was once heavily wooded, but now there are large areas which are quite barren;- the rounded, eroded hills also reminding one of parts of California. The tilling of the soil is spotty, consisting of small patches of grain land and small vineyards and orchards in the valleys and more fertile hillsides. The rest of the country is given over to the grazing of sheep and cattle. The medieval farmer's habit of living in villages, rather than in separate farm houses, persists. Otherwise, these towns, spaced ten or twenty miles apart, serve as the centers of some special little industry or craft. For example, ^{the men of} the village of Trillio, not far from the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila, are famed for their skill as stone-breakers in road-building. In another village which I visited the inhabitants were engaged in the manufacture of colossal jars which are used in all parts of Spain for the storing of oil and grain. All usable timber trees have long since disappeared and building construction is entirely of masonry with tile roofs. The tile roofs are not red,- indeed, none of the tiles of Spain are red, as so many California imitators of Spanish architecture have imagined. The color is quite tawny, not very different from that of the stone used for the walls, which in turn is not very different from the color of the barren hills for much of the year. A Castilian village melts into its landscape to such an extent that when photographed from a distance of a mile or two, it can hardly be discerned excepting for the church, which usually towers above it, or for a ruined castle which stands on a nearby hill.

The Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila was located in a little valley formed by a bend in the River Tagus, the same Tagus which a hundred miles further on in its course flows in such spectacular fashion around the City of Toledo. On one side a steep cliff rises from the river edge; on the other there is a practically level area perhaps 20 acres in extent, with a range of rugged hills encircling it on the northerly side. In the middle of this level site stood the monastery and the land around it was once devoted to orchards, gardens and vineyards and probably to other

accessory buildings. Although only a mile from Trillio, a town which you will find mentioned in the 1913 Baedeker for Spain, this monastery was literally "lost" owing to its secluded site. There is no mention of it in any of the books on Spanish architecture; yet many another monument of far less merit is described in great detail.

The general plan is typical of Cistercian monasteries and is shown in part by this slide. There must have been other buildings than those indicated, such as the abbot's house and the guest house, shops, stables, studios, and, - perhaps an enclosing wall, or a considerable area of farming land to enable the monastery to withstand a siege. This drawing is based upon the ruins which were found by Mr. Arthur Byne in 1930. At that time the monastery had been abandoned for nearly a hundred years. The roof tiles had been removed, with the result that the pressure of the rain-soaked earth covering the vaults had become very great, causing the collapse of some and the rupture of others. The sturdy construction of the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries bravely withstood this shameful neglect and showed little damage when I first saw the group in 1931.

The special architectural value of this group as a whole is that it represents the growth of medieval architecture from its very beginning to its end in the 16th century, - and even includes an example of the renaissance style which followed. The bodega or winery is a simple, rectangular room, spanned by a pointed barrel vault, not unlike a Roman vault, excepting that it is in two arcs instead of a single arc. The building which was next constructed in the 11th and 12th centuries, was the refectory, a structure about 27 ft. by 90 ft., spanned with typical late Romanesque or early Gothic ribbed vaulting. The thick walls are penetrated by high, narrow window, ^{but} with widely splayed reveals, - of value both in increasing the lighting capacity of the openings and in providing excellent port holes for taking a shot at any attackers. It has been said that the function of a medieval castle was to keep ~~some of the wind,~~ out most of the rain, and all of the neighbors; and the function of a medieval monastery was not very different. The 13th century chapter house, a vaulted room about 30 x 46, is perhaps the masterpiece of the group. Both this room and the refectory

have remarkably beautiful proportions and it is my considered opinion that they are unexcelled by any of the many similar examples of Gothic work which I have seen in other parts of Spain and in France, Germany and England. The 15th century church shows the beginning of the decline of the Gothic spirit. The noble simplicity of the early vaulting is replaced by more complicated and ornate forms and the quality of the construction has deteriorated. Instead of using exposed masonry in the vault cells and in the wall surfaces, a sort of rubble, plastered over, is employed. Nevertheless, the chapel is an impressive edifice and when rebuilt it will serve admirably as a place for choral concerts, as well as for museum uses. The dormitory consisting of widely spaced relatively low arches, carrying a wooden roof and ceiling structure, is of uncertain date, because the type persisted through several centuries.

The renaissance portal of the chapel marks the beginning of a new style in the architecture of the monastery; it is a very fine example of the so-called "Plateresque" work of northern Spain and might be by the same artist who did the portal of the university at Alcala de Henaras some fifty miles away. The cloisters, although they plainly bear an early 17th century date, have vaults which are of a Gothic form contemporary with the chapel. It is quite possible that the vaults were of the time of the chapel and that the arcades around the courts proper were the later works. I do not recall seeing any building or group of buildings in Europe in which the succeeding generations of builders showed such respect for the work of their predecessors, as is everywhere evident in this Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila.

The problem of salvaging and shipping the masonry of this noble ^{group} ~~piece~~ of buildings has unfortunately attracted more attention than the buildings themselves. The manner in which these problems were solved can best be shown by the motion picture which I took at the time and which will now be projected.

In Conclusion...

Here is WTS's pencil-scrawled conclusion to his speech at the Museum. It followed the films he had taken of the entire monastery project (moving pictures, of course--he had delighted in a Bell and Howell since the early '20s), and there were ex tempore explanations and comments, really the meat of the lecture, which are now lost. (Oh, for a tape recorder, then!) I quote:

"Great religious architecture transcends time and place and race--even the very creed which gave it being. Like great religious music, it gives without the encumbrance of words--which can so often twist, in their meanings, the very essence of the faith which inspired them.

"One need not believe or even know the pantheism of Greece to see the beauty of the temples at Girgenti; it's a poor sort of Protestant who is not reverent in the glowing shadows of Chartres. Ours is a cosmopolitan community of many races and many creeds. This little monastery of Santa Maria de Ovilla is great religious architecture; and I believe it will give its wordless message to all of us.

"Perhaps there are some who think that religious ideas are anachronisms; that religion has outlived its usefulness. Such doubters must be respected, for they are often the prelude to greater faith. But I think that all of us doubters would do well to consider the statements of one of the greatest doubters of our time, Albert Einstein*:

"'Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked

*What follows was hastily jotted on a separate page, but stapled to WTS's preceding paragraph. I do not have the time, unfortunately, to research this statement; but whether or not it is a direct quotation from Einstein is merely a point of scholarship: the truth is that the words, whether Einstein's or WTS's, articulate perfectly the latter's feeling at that perilous time.

to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, became mute, or worse, in a few short weeks.

"Only the Church, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant alike, stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth. I had never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration, because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise immeasurably."

It is sad that once the full horror of the Holocaust was revealed to the international public at the conclusion of World War II, Einstein's (and WTS's) belief in organized religion's courage was proved only partly justified.

But Einstein's statement was made and quoted by Steilberg (or else the last paragraph is Steilberg, perhaps, not Einstein), in good faith--in the full sense of the word. WTS--brought up a free-thinker, atheist, and robustly anticlerical--offered it as a touching testimony to his new belief in the spiritual strength of mysticism, as well as in the eloquence with which the arts and architecture express universally that mysticism.

And also, WTS made in that lecture a plea from his heart to the people of San Francisco to agree to reassemble the monastery's stones at a dire point in the war when courage born of faith--any faith--could be reborn and flower in the lyrically soaring arches of a resurrected Santa Maria de Ovila.

But the plea was made at the Museum on September 24, 1941, and less than three months afterwards came Pearl Harbor: military action, with matters of the spirit relegated to the army chaplains, was the inevitable consequence, and Santa Maria de Ovila remained, silent and fragmented, in her packing cases.

WTS's letter--one of many--to Julia Morgan, written from Spain, follows, along with WTS's letter to Charles Griffith, City Architect, San Francisco, 1960; and a letter from Edward Hussey to Robert M. Clements, Jr., outlining the monastery's chronology.

A Letter to Julia Morgan, Written from Madrid, 1931

Madrid, March 10th, 1931

Dear Miss Morgan:-

Mr. Byne has repeatedly spoken of the need of secrecy in this matter; therefore, I am not trusting, in this talkative country, to the discretion of any typist, and shall send all of my reports in pencil in the hope that someone in the office can put them in legible form for you. I am keeping a copy for reference; hence, pencil.

There is so much to tell you that I hardly know where to begin. In the first place I want to tell you that the Bynes have been most kind and thoughtful; and these two days they have made me feel quite at home in Madrid. Sunday Mr. Byne and I went over the drawings of the castle in detail and he was very enthusiastic about the design of the building. I was glad to hear so much favorable comment from a man whose business of buying or critically studying the fine old works of art would naturally refine his taste to an exceptional degree.

Monday we drove out to the "job." It is in the mountains north of Cuenca approximately in the location shown on the enclosed map. The drive takes about three hours in a fast car; the Barcelona-Madrid highway is followed until a little beyond Guadalajara; thence on a fairly good dirt road through some very lovely country and two picturesque little villages to within about a quarter mile of the place where the material is being ferried across the river. This last portion of the road has been built along the edge of the river bank or cliff by Mr. Byne's men; it ends at the top of the cable hoist from the ferry. The Tagus is about 100' wide at this point in its turbulent and winding course; and is not only a very swift stream with frequent rapids, but is also subject to quick fluctuations in height. The construction of a bridge would have been an operation of prohibitive expense; so they have made an ingenious ferry with a steel cable threaded between vertical rollers, thus providing for the frequent changes in water level. A miniature railway runs from the opposite bank to the Monastery several hundred yards from the river; small push cars, about the size of those used in mines, are used to haul the stone to the ferry, two cars at a time being put on the rails on the ferry; the ferry is hauled across the stream by pulling on the cable which also serves to keep the "barca" from being swept away; on the far shore the cars are pushed into position for hauling up the incline along the side of the cliff by means of a windlass. Having arrived at the end of the road at the top of the cliff the stone is loaded on the trucks which take it to Madrid. All of which has nothing to do with architecture or structural engineering, but I think

that you should know what obstacles Mr. Byne has had to conquer and how well he has done his work. Of course, my first thought (as an American used to having trucks do everything but climb ladders) was that it might have been better to build the ferry large enough to take a truck so that the loading of the materials onto the trucks could have been done at the building itself. But this would have necessitated a much longer incline along the cliff; the construction of a ferry three or four times the capacity (which might not have been practicable in this cable-type) and the construction of a trucking roadway from the south bank to the site. Furthermore the miniature railway is a great convenience in getting the stones out of the various buildings; the small tracks can be run anywhere in the rooms and some of the stones weigh well over 1000^{lb}.

The best of photographs seldom do justice to an interior, as you know; and excellent as are Mr. Byne's pictures and drawings they can only convey a general idea of the beauty of these rooms. The chapter house and the refectory are, of course, the rooms which appeal to me as the finest on account of their dependence for effect upon simple structural lines. But the chapel is also magnificent; and so are two smaller rooms which Mr. Byne had not uncovered when the purchase was made. The cloister vaults were all taken down before my arrival and most of the stone ribs and spring blocks had been removed to Madrid; the fillings between the ribs in the cloister were little more than rubble plastered over so Mr. Byne did not attempt to save them. The fillings between the ribs of the chapel are of better masonry and Mr. Byne agrees with me that it will probably be usable, although evidently intended to be covered with plaster. The vault cells in the refectory and the chapter house are, as the photos indicate, of nicely fitted stonework. There was a room over the chapter house (but much larger) which had some fine cross arches. I suggest that these be used over the swimming pool and shall send you a sketch showing the possibilities. There are also a great many corbels (early Gothic) which can be used to advantage on both exterior and interior. And then there is a fine early Renaissance (plasteresque) portal to the church. There are large areas of plain wall of finely weathered stone which could be "quarried" and sent if you so desire; as the expense seems warranted, Mr. Byne is very anxious to just remove from the site all the carved or moulded members, as he fears interference by the authorities at any time. We presented the entire matter to the national art commission and they were entirely agreeable to him taking this forgotten and shamefully neglected and abused group of buildings; but it is quite possible that some of the politicians, in an effort to discredit those in power, may bring pressure to bear through the press that would halt the work at once. Mr. Byne feels that once the ornamented or moulded parts are removed we would be safe from interference; and could then take out as much of the remaining stone as we

found usable. As soon as possible I shall advise you of the approximate cost of getting out the plain stone for either interior or exterior facings. There is one place which I feel very much needs stone on the interior wall surfaces;- the chapel; in my opinion this room suffers seriously from the contrast between the fine large round piers at the crossing and the rather skimpy ones on the sides of the nave; the defect is evident on the photograph but is much more apparent in the room itself; it could of course be largely concealed by the wall being made of the same material as the piers; just as it has been greatly accentuated by the plastering of the wall surfaces between the piers. I should have mentioned above that we have enough extra springing or impost blocks for the three extra bays in the library; and I have asked Mr. Byne to have made whatever extra rib blocks are necessary. Whether we "quarry" the walls or not, we shall send an ample number of large blocks of the stone for repairs and patching at Wynton. We are sending you a sample of the stone cut from the westhandd facing of one of the walls; but I need hardly caution you that there is a great variation in this material and that, therefore, it is impossible to give an idea of its beauty from samples. There seem to be at least three different varieties when the material is examined closely; or possibly the difference in appearance and hardness is due to difference in age and weathering or position of setting bed with respect to natural strata. As nearly as I can judge, the nearest that we could come to this material in California would be with a mixture of blocks of Indiana limestone, Chatworth Park stone, and Boise limestone; and then it would lack the orange tones of this material as well as its hand surfacing and shaping.

You can realize that the construction of the scaffolding for the removal of these "free-hand" Gothic arches and warped vault surfaces is a task requiring great skill and care. The architectural historians dwell at length upon the fact that every stone in a Gothic structure is "working", deriving support from and giving it to adjacent stones; but not until you begin to take down a Gothic edifice do you fully realize that, by the same principle, the removal of one or two stones necessitates the secure supporting of all the others. Difficult as it is to build scaffold panels to fit to these curves and warped surfaces, it would be much more difficult for us to build centerings in California,- with no model to work to,- upon which the arches and vaults could be re-erected. We are, therefore, having the necessary parts of the centerings marked and shipped so that they can be re-erected for their respective arches and vaults, thus effecting a very considerable saving in time and expense. The stone is all being marked and diagramed very carefully so that there should be no difficulty about re-erecting it. I am sure that it would pay, however, if we could get Mr. Byne's superintendent and masonry foreman to come to California to set up the stone; they are remarkably clever men and very fast as well as very fine craftsmen; you would be amazed, as I was,

at the masterly way in which they are going at this job; everything orderly, trim, sure-handed; nothing that even suggested uncertain direction or slovenly workmanship. (Symon's and Dolan's would be surprised to see wrecking practised as a fine art.) Either these men have inherited some of their great skill from their old-master ancestors or Mr. Byne has taught and directed them exceedingly well; possibly both influences are present. All the architectural world knows of Mr. Byne's ability as a critic and as an artist; I have come to the conclusion that he is an equally capable administrator. He now has sixty-six men at work and expects to have a hundred next week if the weather is not too unfavorable. The work is naturally dangerous and requires caution as well as ingenuity; the superintendent told me that the insurance for forty men for four months on this kind of work cost about \$1000.00. The commissary in this remote spot is almost as difficult as at San Simeon. And the removal of rubbish and debris and the bracing of tottering walls was a job in itself before the work could even begin. Over the refectory there is an earth "fill;" about four feet thick at the crown and considerably more at the sides,- all of which has to be picked and shoveled off before the stone vaults can be removed. In fact the difficulties are so numerous that if it were not for cheap labor and the favorable exchange on the pesos the expense would seem prohibitive. The most of it, of course, is the preparatory work,- road, hoist, ferry, railroad, clearing up and erection of scaffolds and centerings, and the taking down and packing of the vaults and arches; now that the organization has been developed, the quarrying of the ashler may possibly prove considerably cheaper than American material. However, I shall let you know later about the cost. In general building labor costs here are about a third of what they are in California.

For several reasons I am staying at a hotel in Madrid; in the first place Mr. Byne has already done or is doing much of the work which we thought I might have to undertake, so that I can probably finish my preliminary structural design and get all of the other information which you require in two or three weeks; it would hardly pay for me to build a room at the site inasmuch as Mr. Byne has kindly placed his spare car and chauffeur at my disposal for the two or three trips a week I shall make to the building. And furthermore, it is not advisable for a foreigner to be on the job constantly as it would lead to discussion which might get back to some of the busy-body politicians. I shall probably be leaving Madrid within a week after this reaches you so that a cable would be necessary should you wish to give me further instructions.

I have taken some movies of the operations and shall send them on as soon as they have been developed.

Best wishes to you and all the "force"

(signed) Walter T. Steilberg

Copy for:

Mayor George Christopher
Trustees of the de Young
Museum

Dr. Walter Heil, Director
of the de Young Museum

WALTER T. STEILBERG
CONSULTING ARCHITECT
NO. 3-PANORAMIC WAY
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THORNWALL 3-1760

August 30, 1960

STONEWORK OF THE MONASTERY
OF SANTA MARIA DE OVILA

SALVAGE OF MATERIAL IN BURNED
CASES IN STORAGE
IN GOLDEN GATE PARK

Mr. Charles Griffith,
City Architect,
City Hall,
San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mr. Griffith:

1. In view of there having been so much misunderstanding about Mr. Hearst's gift to San Francisco, I feel it is necessary to briefly review the facts in the case. Again and again press reports have implied that there was in storage in Golden Gate Park one complete Spanish Monastery all ready for reassembling. Much of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila, possibly a fourth of the stonework of the entire group had been taken away for other building purposes long before I first saw the buildings in 1931. The remains which Mr. Hearst purchased were:

- (a) The Chapel (16th century; about 29' - 4" x 157') ceiling vault ribs, columns, entrance doorway and the vault ribs of the adjoining side Chapels and Sacristy. None of the wall stones of this building were removed from the site; the walls were merely rubble which had been plaster-finished; similarly no attempt was made to salvage the vault cell masonry which had also been plastered.
- (b) The Refectory (12th century, about 27' x 85') although quite crude in workmanship was a particularly magnificent example of early transitional Romanesque-Gothic work and both interior and exterior were in a fair state of preservation,—considering the 800 years exposure of this rather soft limestone to the severe climate of the location. All of the vault ribs and vault cell stones as well as the simple capitals of the Refectory were crated; so were the carved capitals of the entrance doorway, the window reveals and the carved corbels of the gables and the side overhangs. The rectangular wall facing stones were wrapped in heavy matting.
- (c) A Cloister Arcade along one side of the Chapel (and of the same period) was rather badly damaged by weather. Only the vault ribs and impost capitals of this Arcade were crated.
- (d) The Chapter House (about 32' - 8" x 48' - 2") was a very fine example of 13th century Gothic. This masonry was much more precise in its cutting and finish than that of the Refectory. All of the vault ribs, vault cell stones and capitals of the columns were crated; as were the small window arches and splayed reveals. Interior wall facing stones were wrapped in heavy matting.
- (e) A rather complex triple doorway was on the Cloister side of the Chapter House, the modeling and plate tracery of which indicated that it was probably of 14th or 15th century origin. This work was also crated.
- (f) Dormitory arch stones were wrapped in matting.

2. In the design for the Medieval Museum for San Francisco which was developed by Julia Morgan, Architect, about thirteen years ago there was no intention of using the stonework for anything but the interior;—with the exception of the entrance doorway to the Chapel and the roof corbel stones of the Refectory; otherwise, as is evident in Miss Morgan's drawings, the exterior walls would have been stucco finished (over modern reinforced concrete). Possibly the display of this design (especially one model) without adequate explanation (or with the normal tendency of newspapers to exaggerate) has led to the assumption that there is a complete monastery in storage.
3. This stonework has suffered much abuse. After the Spanish Government took the Monastery from the Cistercian Order about 1834 it was acquired by an aristocrat who used the buildings for farm purposes. When I first saw the Chapter House it was being used as a manure pit; and the Chapel and Refectory were farm warehouses. The tile roofs had long since been stripped off,—probably by the poverty-stricken people in nearby villages. The earth fills used to form the roof slopes on top of the Refectory and Chapter House had quite a growth of shrubs and even small trees. In the process of demolition, despite the care of a very skillful crew experienced in such work, there was some damage; and of course there was further damage and loss in the crating and shipment by truck, rail and sea. Finally there was damage due to the stones being left out of doors in excelsior packing; alternately wet and dry, and then the destruction wrought by five different fires which included the effects of falling and quenching as well as heat. In removing this much damaged masonry from the half burned or scorched crates and re-piling the usable pieces there was inevitably some further fracturing,—although I could not have asked for a more skillful and co-operative crew than that which was supplied by the Flora Crane Service Company.
4. The work accomplished in the 27 working days by the Flora Company consisted of the removal from crates and the sorting of the stones from three large piles containing principally stones from the Chapel, Cloister Arcade, Chapter House, and Refectory. Nearly all of the identification marks on crates had been burned off and many of the numbers and letters on the stones were obliterated. It soon became evident (as I advised Mr. Mullins in the second week of this work) that within the time and cost limits of the contract it would not be possible to more than sort out the sound, usable stones and remove those which could not be repaired. The trucking of the rejected material to the location designated by the Park Department and the hauling of the partly burned crates to the city dump constituted a much larger factor in the work,—and in delay than was implied by the contract.
5. All stones were tested for freedom from cracks by sounding with an 8 inch cold chisel; any which did not have a clear ring were examined very carefully and were either rejected or cleared of the cracked part if it was small. I considered it important to retain only the sound stones because a cracked one might easily break off and crush a mason's hand or foot in the process of re-use. The only exception to this practice was that I ordered the salvage of certain cracked stones which could be used as patterns for new stones. These were placed on the ground where the damage could easily be detected. There is a possibility that some of the cracked pieces may be mended by means of the recently developed epoxy cements.
6. Restoration of the Chapter House and the Refectory are definite possibilities. While there was much damage to the molded and carved stonework of these fine rooms, the salvage of about 40% to 50% of the Refectory vaulting, capitals and columns and about 50% to 60% of similar parts of the Chapter House indicate

that these rooms could be rebuilt substantially as they were at the time of their construction in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The missing stones could be replaced by cast stone, of a color and texture to match the old work, using the salvaged pieces as models and checking locations by means of drawings and photographs made prior to dismantling.

The restoration of the Chapter House and the Refectory,—not only for their own great value as architectural specimens, but also for their possible use in extending needed display areas for works of the medieval period is,—as I have been advised, the primary interest of Dr. Walter Heil, Director of the de Young Museum. The accompanying sketch shows the approximate location which Dr. Heil has advised for the Refectory and Chapter House;—a location, which, it should be noted, will in no way encroach on the recreation areas of the park and should therefore arouse no opposition from those who were formerly so hostile to the construction of the proposed Medieval Museum. The restoration of the Chapel as part of the de Young Museum is not being considered at this time.

The general procedure which I would advise in the restoration would be somewhat as follows:

- (a) Clear an area adjacent to the piles of stone as now assembled for the Refectory Chapter House and Chapel. Lay out on this ground the centering for one of the buildings (preferably first the Chapter House) and fit the damaged stone to these wood forms now stored in the Museum. Thus determine the replacements which will be required.
- (b) Construct reinforced concrete building (or buildings) designed to adequately resist earthquake effects;—leaving the needed service gaps in the roof slab or walls to facilitate re-erection of masonry.
- (c) Rebuild the stone-work of the room in question providing adequate ties and anchors to assure safety in an earthquake.
- (d) Finish the room by sandblasting to remove smoke stains and provide the needed heat, light, finish floor and glazing;—possibly medieval stain glass if available or alabaster slabs as in the original buildings.

Cost estimates of this work have not been completed and in any case must be considered as gross approximations because there is such a large labor factor and there is a lack of skilled stone masons.

7. There is a fourth pile (the one close to the rear entrance of the Japanese Tea Garden) which has not been touched. This pile probably contains stones from the Chapel; but since in all of our other work we found a considerable mixing of the different parts of the monastery it is possible that there may also be parts of the Refectory and Chapter House in this pile. In any case it should be cleaned up,—to get rid of the fire hazard of the crates even though the stones may not be those which are of first value with reference to architectural history. The San Francisco City Fire Prevention Bureau has confirmed my opinion that there may be a spontaneous combustion hazard in such tightly packed excelsior in pine crates stacked high in the open and exposed to moisture. Mr. Amadio of the Flora Crane Service Company is of the opinion that it would probably take 6 - 8 more working days to clean up this remaining pile and sort the stones as in the work just completed. If the City will authorize this extra work I shall be glad to donate the necessary days of my time to the completion of this sorting project.

8. In conclusion I wish to express my appreciation of the help of the Park Department in cutting and removing trees which interfered with the crane operations and in arranging for the use of the broken stones for garden wall work in a not-distant part of the park.

Without the almost daily encouragement of Dr. Heil and Colonel Macalpine I might have called a halt to the job in the first week or two for there were some days when as much as 90% of the stones handled were damaged beyond use. My thanks for the co-operation of Mr. Mullins of your office and to Mr. McInnes and Mr. Dake of the Building Inspection Department who took over for me when I was obliged to leave the job for a half hour to answer phone calls.

Mr. J. Amadio, who directed this work for the Flora Crane Service Company, deserves much credit for the thoughtful planning as well as the mechanical skill and driving energy which he applied to this job. So do all of his assistants,—in their several parts of the work: E.F. Butler, crane operator; D. Sickles, H. Rollins and Z.E. Curl, oilers; J. Glass, W.D. Brooks, and J. Holt, truck drivers; A. Padilla, M.D. Canton, J. Gallardo, T. Scofield, and R. Amadio, laborers. Mr. Flora also deserves credit for selecting these men,—and meeting the payroll.

Enclosed are some action photos showing that this was a difficult, dirty, and dangerous job; in my opinion it was a job well done,—not only with reference to the material handling, but also in the avoidance of any serious injuries to the workmen. I would be glad to see all or any of these men on any work under my direction.

Yours truly,

Walter T. Steilberg

EDWARD B. HUSSEY
ARCHITECT
155 EL CAMINO REAL
BERKELEY, CALIF. 94703

Phone 652-9344

A Letter from Edward Hussey 333
to Robert M. Clements, Jr.,
Outlining the Monastery's Chronology

Feb. 27, 1975

Robert M. Clements, Jr.
3530 Washington St.
San Francisco, Calif. 94118

Dear Mr. Clements:

Your article on Santa Maria de Ovila Monestary is indeed interesting and had hoped to answer sooner. However I have been going thru Walter T. Steilbergs papers and will outline some of the items found. You may already have seen them or part of them, letters between W.T.S. and Julia Morgan and Arthur Byne (1931) a lecture by W.T.S. Sept. 1941 at S.F. Museum of Art, letters of 1951 and 1959 and more particularly did you see the English translation by Francisco Centurion (1947) of a Spanish book "EL MONASTERIO DE OVILA por Francisco Layna Serrano, Medico Madrid 1932"? About 200 typewritten pages give the detailed history of the monastery from the founding in 1181 to its removal in 1931. It was about 100 miles North East of Madrid.

For your information here are some of the dates:
1181 Refectory 27' x 90' begun during reign of Alphons VIII (±1158-88)
The Refectory and the Chapter House 30' x 45' "Masterpiece of Gothic" and also the bodega (wine vault) completed under Henry I (1214-1230)
1186 Monks moved to Ovila to live
1213 St. Martin visited Ovila for summer leaving in Sept.
1214-1230 Romanesque church built under Henry I.
End of XIII century and beginning XIV most prosperous.
XV-XVI Romanesque church demolished and replaced by Gothic Church.
Early XVII Century fire burned archives.
1617 Cloister half built and work stopped (Herrera famous Architect)
1820-23 Monks were expelled. Property sold to don Francisco Antonio Ardis in 1821.
1823 Property returned to monks.
1835 Monastery secularized and closed and at some time passed into hands of Don Mariano Vadillo.

Letters W.T.S. to Julia Morgan (Madrid- San Francisco)
1931

Mar. 10 (W.T.S. evidently arrived there Mar. 7 or 8)
"Sun. with Byne went over drawings of Castle. Mon. drove out to the job about 3 hours by fast car". (4pg. letter)
Mar. 12 Taken by car to Trillio. River so high could not use ferry and had to take long detour by mule. Work progressing well. Will have 110 men on job next week. Over 100 tons of stone now in Madrid, first truck load to railway station a couple of days ago. "Plateresque Portal to Church in good condition. Please advise whether you want this or not. Mr. Byne is of the opinion that Mr. Hearst is so well stocked with Renaissance works of art that he might not be interested in this one." (Note as of todate this is the only part used).
Mar. 13 Questions shipping by entrain²st New York, San Francisco or possibly Eureka. (Which would be closer to Wynton)
Mar. 18 Excellent progress. 67 men working at site, 16 in Madrid packing. Suggested sending two of the Spanish craftsmen to

California for rerection. Asked again about the Bodega vault discussed in letter of 3/12. It was not included in the purchase being the wine cellar about 27' x 90' a tunnel vault of 1 3th or 1 4th century W.T.S. admired.

- Mar.24 Shipping business complex, about excessive costs etc. Political difficulties. "A good deal of my time these last two weeks has been spent on this problem of transportation: in America it could have been settled in a day."
- Mar.29 Difficulty of export officials to "bootleg those thousands of cases out of the country". Agreement signed with transport company \$10.00 ton Valencia or Barcelona to San Francisco. W.T.S. departing Mar. 31 to arrive N.Y. Apr.7 on "Bremen".

Letters W.T.S.(Berkeley) to Arthur Byne (Madrid)

1931

Jul.18 1st and 2nd shipments arrived in excellent condition now in S.F. warehouse

Aug.14 3rd shipment received last week ("apparently the trans* shipment at Philadelphia caused some damage"). The 6th shipment directly from Valencia no damage. The 4th and 5th consignments in S.F. but not yet unloaded. Sorry Mr.Hearst cancelled order for the bodega.

1932

Apr.29 Our working drawings have not yet been made and my structural design has been developed only in outline form.

Letter Arthur Byne, Madrid to New York agent

Sept.3,1931 Last stone shipped fortnight ago.

From personal diary Ed.B.Hussey

1933

June 16 9:45am arrived Wyntoon.

24 Conference Julia Morgan(J.M.) Fred Stolte, contractor and Ariss (of Ariss-Knapp,Excavators) at castle site.

25 Building job office.

-27 10:30pm.W.R.Hearst and guests arrived.

28 W.R.H. and J.M. conference.

29 Steam shovel arrive. J.M. to S.F.

Jul. 3 Letter W.T.S. to E.B.H. regarding concrete mixes etc.

5 J.M. arrive

6 Stake out new plan for castle on old site

7 W.R.H. and Warren McClure working on new plan.

15 W.R.H. and J.M. discuss "Angel Creek".

17 "No work at castle site". It was about this time that W.R.H. became very angry that we were putting a roof on a small shack for the contractor and said to me "Maybe we aren't going to build a castle maybe we aren't going to have a contractor. Put them on something else."

19 Stake out Waterhouse No.5 (Bavarian Village)

25 Move job office from old castle site up river (McCloud) about half a mile to Bavarian Village site.

Aug. 28 "Stop all work".

31 Restart houses 5 & 7.

Sep. 1 Grade old castle site.

Oct. 14 E.B.H. asked by J.M. and B.R.Maybeck to return to Principia job

- 1941, July 5 S.F. Call-Bulletin all pg.3 photos of monastery.
- July 19 W.R.H. gave monastery material to City of S.F. and it was moved to Golden Gate Park (Exam-Chron.2/1/70)
- Sep.24 W.T.S. lecture at S.F. Museum of Art "Moving a Monastery from Spain to San Francisco" giving some history of building and its architectural features. The lecture was followed by a movie of the salvaging and shipping.
- 1946
- Nov.26 J.M. to W.T.S. Suggests that Dr.Heil not show any activity on proposed site such as taking borings until actual site has been decided upon.
- 1 947
- Feb.10 W.T.S. Memo of conference with City Inspection office and stone companies.
- Oct.4 W.T.S. to J.M. in Buenos Aires. With Dr. Walter Heil selected some of monastery stones for an exhibit.
- 1949
- Sep.22 Dr.Heil to W.T.S. Obstacles on locating monastery hope decision soon.
- Oct.18 Note from J.M. to W.T.S. Thanks for putting drawings in shape.
- 1950
- Jan.18 W.T.S. to J.M. Mazatlan, Mexico. Dr.Heil renewed interest and question of alternate sites. Herbert Fleishhaker hoped for cost figure might get \$500,000 to start.
- Jan.23 W.T.S. to H.Fleishhaker & W.Heil. J.H. LeFeaver made estimate on reconstruction in 1941 at \$530,000 which would now (1950) be about 2.75 times as much or near \$1,450,000. Decision needed on site location.
- Jan.30 W.T.S. to H.F. & W.H. J.M. prefer Funston Ave. site. separate from De Young Museum.
- Jan.30 W.T.S. to J.N. Panama. Mr.Fleishhaker hopeful of about \$800,00. He and Dr.Heil prefer site next to DeYoung.
- Nov.1 W.T.S. to J.M. 2229 Divisadero. (no funds in sight) H.F. & W.H. think more public objection to separate site.
- Nov.6 Problem of Park Commission, Planning Commission, future W.T.S. highways and "those who would like to see the monastery to H.F. put on Sutro Heights or Seal Rocks." Site next to DeYoung better for administration. Site separate better setting and chance for individual donation.
- 1 959
- Jun.11 W.T.S. to James Cook, S.F. Examiner 4pg letter. Explaining that material is not for a complete monastery. It was not complete as brought from Spain and "Much of this stone masonry has now been seriously damaged by four fires. The first in 1941 did relatively little damage and a second fire some years later was not serious; but the last two fires which occurred in Dec.1958 and May 1959, have so added to the destruction that I now doubt that enough can be saved to restore even one of the rooms. However the board of Supervisors has authorized \$1,500,000 to investigate--"
- "In his original purchase of this stone work Mr. Hearst intended it for use in the building of a castle at Wyntoun which would have far exceeded the magnificence of San Simeon."

- 1 959
Oct. 20 W.T.S. to Dr. Walter Heil. "Examination of Stonework of Monastery Sept. 21 to 25, 1959" Only small amount of stone examined. First two days much fell apart when lifted mostly Chapel. More hopeful conditions Chapter House 80% useable, restoration possibility. Refectory very little thus far located.
- 1960
Aug. 8 S.F. Chronicle pg. 4 pictures and small item on monastery headlined "S.F. May Still Pick Up the Pieces".
Aug. 30 W.T.S. to Charles Griffith City Architect 4pg report. plus diagram showing Chapterhouse, Refectory and Cloister attached to DeYoung Museum in the North West angle. Salvage of about 50% of Refectory and Chapterhouse makes restoration a possibility.
- 1970
Feb. 1 S.F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle pg. 11. A half page history and picture of stone pile. Headlined "Strange History of Those Monastery Stones By Harold Streeter". Outlines work of bringing stones to Calif. under direction of W.T.S. Talk of BART using stones in one of stations. In 1951 Mayor Elmer Robinson tried to get financing for reerection as memorial to Hearst. In 1957 Mayor George Christopher tried for bond issue. "DeYoung museum raised \$40,000 privately and restored the chapel's 34ft. high portal at the North end of the museum's Hearst Court. In 1965 in "The Garden of Fragrance. A wall along a curving pathway was made with stones from the monastery."
- 1972
June 9 Ian M. White, Director of Museums to W.T.S. Would like to learn more about "a significant piece of Medieval architecture lying in the back yard".
- 1 974
Dec. 10 Berkeley Daily Gazette pg. 11 "Architect Steilberg dies from injuries". "Walter T. Steilberg, 88 died Friday (Dec. 6, 1974) -- commissioned by W.R.H. -- dismantling stone-by-stone a Gothic monastery in Spain, to be reassembled in California -- a large portion of the stones, stored outside the DeYoung Museum were destroyed by fire several years ago."

In your article you did not mention and I wonder if you know that the original castle at Wynton for Phoebe Apperson Hearst was designed by Bernard R. Maybeck, Architect. On page 6 you mention W.T.S. setting out with a "full set of drawings". These were of course preliminary as it never did get to working drawings. On page 12 you mention the "~~bodega~~" bodega" which people in this area might think of as a bay. It was the winery, "a tunnel vault 27'x90'8" -- about 13th or 14th century". which W.T.S. liked very much but which W.R.H. did not buy. You mention the "the church itself-- the one Saint Martin had waited to concecate". The church of 1931 was not built until some 300 years after St. Martin as noted on the first page of this letter and even the ~~argk~~ original church was not started until after his time of 1213. On page 14 it indicates that Mr. Hearst had given up the castle idea when the stone arrived in S.F. in 1931 but we were still working on the castle at Wynton until July 1933.

The DeYoung Museum has an original Spanish copy of Serrano's book mentioned at beginning of letter.

Sincerely yours,

Ed. B. Hunsley

XII THE SCHOOL BOARD YEARS

Politically WTS was, as in most things, both imaginatively and stubbornly independent. As one whose sympathies were mostly with the Democratic party, he remained a life-long registered Republican in order to have the privilege of voting against a Republican candidate in the primary election. Once during the downfall of ex-president Nixon, he said proudly: "I am honored to have the distinction of having voted four times against Richard Nixon!"

During the Thirties he was persuaded by Berkeley's mayor, Frank Gaines, his good friend, to tilt lances in Berkeley's local political lists. He won a place on the Board of Education, serving six years--two very tumultuous terms, during which he was frequent headline material, due to his unyielding and often spectacularly stubborn insistence on quality in teaching and high academic standards.

Fighting for excellence at the level of school administration, he sponsored for the principalship of Berkeley High School Kenneth May, a childhood and college friend of mine (who like so many others of my generation, as students in the Thirties, had been a theoretical Marxist). WTS knew Kenny's scholastic and personal integrity, his brilliance both as a scholar and as a teacher, and he was convinced that Kenny would make an excellent principal--"Not like those up-graded C-minus-average playground directors who are all getting to be school principals these days," he fumed.

This, of course, was headline fuel for East Bay editors, most of whom had little but unemployment figures to rely on for lead story materials, or perhaps a proposed new WPA project. Banner heads were all over the San Francisco Bay Area journals, "STEILBERG SPONSORS COMMUNIST," and although he lost the fight for his candidate, he loved every minute of it, plunging into each inevitable battle with the conservatives with great zest.

But one after-effect was to be expected. During the McCarthy era, he was summoned to testify before the Dies Committee as to his "loyalty." He acquitted himself with eloquence, of course, and with his usual tenacity. Making his own defense before the Committee, he included several sentences which provoked Committee members' responses such as "That's seditious!" or "Pure Commie propaganda!" He was then delighted to be able to point out that the quotations were from the United States' Constitution. Many years afterward he was often to remark in high glee that "The proudest I ever was of anything I ever did was when I routed those S.O.B.s!"

WTS left, however, a lasting imprint on the whole of Berkeley's educational life and on its cultural milieu as well, in proposing, successfully, that the Berkeley High School Auditorium be of maximum use to the Berkeley community as a whole. He insisted that it be designed for realistic practicality in all areas of performance and entertainment, with professional equipment to provide proper training for the students. Since he detested what he called "wasted" buildings (such as the UC Stadium, which he considered as serving a far too limited purpose, and that much too infrequently), he wanted the students to have a proper and professional stage. The continuing (at this writing) excellence of Berkeley High School's dramatic productions is a testimony, in part, to the physical plant. He also wanted the community of Berkeley, which at that time could only suffer, on campus, the hazards of pneumonia in the Greek Theater or the equal perils of suffocation in Wheeler Hall Auditorium, to enjoy a large, comfortable, practical, and versatile auditorium-plus-theater.

XIII KODIAK

The Kodiak Years: World War II

At the start of World War II, WTS, then 56, was deeply disappointed that the U.S. Navy considered him "too old" for active duty; but from April 1942, to February 1946 he was structural engineer on Kodiak Island's Naval Operating Base, from 1943 on serving in what was euphemistically called the "public works" department of the U.S. Navy. (He was always pleased that my husband took to calling him, affectionately, "Admiral.") Because the nature of the work was "classified," at that time I had no idea exactly what he was up to, as when he came back to California on leave, he naturally kept mum--except for his classes in engineering for the Sea-bees, which he spoke of with much pleasure.

But in a vitae which has recently shown up amongst his papers, one dated, I should guess, around 1949, there is a brief summary of what he actually was doing for the Navy:

"This work included a wide variety of types of buildings as well as kinds of construction: barracks, warehouses, wharves, derricks, stacks, magazines, housing, hangars, culverts, recreation buildings, gun emplacements, and small bridges. The distance from main sources of supply made it necessary to resort to many unusual schemes of structural design and the employment of materials... (blocks of ice?)...in other than standardized manner." (Parenthesis mine.--H.L.)

Kodiak Nights

In September, 1942, he knocked out a bit of homespun verse, which has since been circulated widely. Here it is:

KODIAK NIGHTS
September '42

So now I lay me down to hear
The trucks and jeeps a-changin' gear.
A plane roars out--so low, so near--
My hands get moist from sudden fear.

Two men are quarrelin' 'cross the hall,
A radio screams--right through the wall,
Announcements of a Spokane sale;
And then the Andrews sisters wail.

The night-shifts work from now 'til dawn
With screech and whang of power sawin',
With hammer blows on wood or steel
With clank of chain and whirr of wheel.

Young roommate staggers in half drunk,
And stumbles, cursin' to his bunk--
"God damn them perfumed squealin' whores";
Then groans, and sobs, and moans; then snores.

The clatter of pneumatic drills,
The crash of rock in roadway fills.
Two whistles blow--one deep, one shrill.
O Lord, when will this night be still?

And so--

If I should die before I sleep,
I pray the boss my check to keep
To help to build some quieter hell,
Where workin' men can rest a spell.

...and Days

But it was not all "Kodiak Nights." For soon he was able to rent a cottage, only a blizzard or two away from the base; he loved the challenge of the cold, the glory of the spring, the peace of unspoiled nature--whether frozen or flowering. And he loved his class of Sea-bees, to whom he taught, on his own time, engineering. In 1945, Elizabeth, who had put in heart-rending years as a Red Cross

psychiatric counselor to the war-wounded, joined him in Kodiak and both delighted in the dramatic seasons of the north.

Then, twenty years after 1926, WTS had an experience similar to that of his old friend Robert Paine with a California lynx. Going on a walk in the wilds and savoring the pure light and the delicate, rainbow-glowing profusion of springtime flowers, he rounded a corner to find himself suddenly face-to-face with one of the furry and fanged terrors of the region: a full-grown Kodiak bear. WTS stopped, admired the enormous animal's magnificent aspect, beamed, and said benevolently, "Well, hello!" (It was difficult for him to believe evil of any animal.) The bear, inquiringly poised on his hind legs, also took measure. Discerning neither ill-will nor fear, he snuffled and snorted briefly, then turned and lumbered away, those formidable toes inwards, back into the leafy tracery of the woods. In retrospect however, WTS admitted his eventual realization that he had been in--and had escaped--extreme peril...but yet, "That bear was so handsome, such a noble animal. I'd have liked to make friends with him."

After WTS's death, Rosalie and I found volume after volume of meticulously pressed and, in his hasty hand, properly identified dried spring flowers from the northland; this sunny gift of nature, in combination with the joys of teaching his brilliant engineering students and the companionship they all shared in good music and good talk, also shortened the brutally icy, long, snow-bound, and ever-ominous winters on Kodiak.

Mort Colodny, one of WTS's trainees who later became a freeway engineer for the State of California and who subsequently, as an inborn conservationist, changed fields to join the Berkeley Co-op as an executive in the 1960's, said to me, "Walter...it wasn't just that meticulous training we had; it was the whole man, what he gave us all. He'd invite us to dinner and somehow manufacture from those awful rations an imaginative spread; and then we'd all talk: standards, goals, ideals. The evening ended with his records of classical music--Mozart, to Beethoven, to Brahms...he was the one who saw us through all that frozen hell."

XIV SAUDI ARABIA

In 1952, WTS's career in structural design took him again overseas: the Arabian American Oil Company offered him a post involving new challenges, another culture (he had not worked before in the Middle East), and despite a thriving office in Berkeley, he jumped at the chance. As life for women in Saudi Arabia was still dreadfully confined (as it is, even today: an American friend of mine, presently there with her husband, also American, on a two-year, heavily-funded cancer research project, must live in a compound and may never leave it without a male escort--even if he is only a twelve-year-old boy), WTS elected to work mostly in Rome, Aramco's nearest European base office. But he commuted frequently to Saudi Arabia by plane.

He and Elizabeth lived in Rome for better than two years in a penthouse atop an old palazzo at 31 Via Sistina, and it was a happy time for both. They were among the Italian people they both loved, and again, after thirty years, there was a Maria holding court in the kitchen and singing, a bit south on the high notes, fragments of Verdi to the accompaniment of her canary.

Again--I am not equipped to describe his engineering projects there; I imagine that these are among his papers in the UC architectural archive. But he came back with a treasure chest of anecdotes about people and customs. One--totally unrelated to his field but worth preserving--is a good example. One blisteringly hot dusty day, he and several other engineers were awaiting their plane back to Rome in a dingy Arabian airport restaurant. Presently, in swept an Arab woman who moved in a manner both regal and femininely fascinating; she was of course done up in black veils, head-to-toe, with only her gloriously expressive huge black eyes visible. Clearly a personage of some importance, she was accompanied by a retinue of perhaps a dozen, and all took tables and ordered refreshments.

To a man, the American engineers kept a curious and appreciative eye on the lady with the seductive walk and the gorgeous eyes: food

had been ordered--would she throw back her veil to eat, so that they could enjoy the sight of what they all whispered to each other must be a fabulous face?

At length, the food for the lady and her retinue arrived, but she did not lift the veil from her face. Calling to a maid who brought her a thoroughly bundled-up baby, she casually, and with total dignity, unveiled a single breast and nursed her little one. The American engineers blushed furiously, looked away, and began an artificially animated conversation about joists and stresses.

XV SOME WTS LETTERS

WTS was a prolific and thoughtful correspondent; and I think the reader will enjoy a few samples which display not only his wit, but his warm concern with what news the recipient of the note enjoyed--or the quotation, or the photograph, for he remembered always his friends' interests. The letters themselves follow my brief descriptions.

Letter of November 1, 1950: This first letter was to Jack Arnold, re his (clearly handwritten) thesis on Maybeck. (Note the "...I have taken the liberty of having your thesis typed." It is quite possible that this was something the author could not himself then afford.)

Letter of December 28, 1933: This letter is not from WTS, but from Charles Derleth, Jr., Dean of the College of Engineering at UC Berkeley, in response to one of my father's frequent, impulsive, and à propos minor remembrances to friends. Dean Derleth's letter is dated December 28, 1933, when WTS, researching in concrete on the UC campus, was turning adversity to advantage in preparing himself for a new career.

Letter of April 12, 1947: This letter is to one of his former draftsmen, who shortly received a permanent position elsewhere, and his fiancée. The young Parug couple's letter in thanks reads, in part: "We received your extremely flattering letter and your very generous gift...We are proud to know of your high opinion of us and we shall sincerely try never to disappoint you. We shall treasure your letter for the rest of our lives..."

Letter of December 26, 1951: This letter to Providence Hospital, Oakland, speaks for itself.

Letter of May 25, 1957: This letter reveals two aspects of WTS: his affection for Julia Morgan and his recognition of the ability and credit due her "team," and his occasional tiffs with the AIA--in this case a little quiet tail-twisting. Written on his letter-head, the signature is a gorgeous joke: Inigo Jones was the great English architect largely responsible for introducing the Palladian style of architecture into England in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. WTS's handwritten notation at the bottom of the page reads: "This letter was sent (to the Regents) in care of the AIA in the hope that it might suggest a contribution on the part of the S.F. Chapter of the AIA. Possibly it did." (Parenthesis mine.--H.L.)

Letter of February 23, 1962: This letter to Judge William H. Brailsford of the Oakland-Piedmont Municipal Court is the first of a thick sheaf of carbon copies of correspondence on the subject of a construction worker in trouble for whom he took up the cudgels--and won, after several skirmishes with the judiciary. (The workman, Fred Manuel, was paroled, thanks to WTS's hiring and paying the costs of a lawyer for him and obtaining him employment.)

A last sample is from a letter he wrote Mrs. Beverly Gayle (Norris) Heinrichs of Berkeley on July 18, 1968. Mrs. Heinrichs had done a great deal of secretarial work for him; earlier, she had been U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren's secretary when he was California's governor, and there is a volume on her among the Regional Oral History Office's biographies. And she has my enduring gratitude for having helped me immeasurably by transcribing my dictated tapes of large portions of this manuscript.

Mrs. Heinrichs had just undergone surgery for cataracts; he wrote her from his hospital bed, where he himself was still very ill. I quote, in part:

"So glad to get your note and to have the good news that you can resume your work...before I had a chance to write to you, I was rushed to the hospital with such an acute case of peritonitis that the surgeons decided to use the stomach pump, with venous (sic) feeding and masses of doses of antibiotics...However, life in other ways, many other ways, is still very interesting, and for the most part beautiful. I have often thought of what terror you must have had to brave in the threat of the impairment of your sight."

The Letters

November 1, 1950

Mr. Jack Arnold,
402 Jackson Street,
San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mr. Arnold:

Many thanks for the loan of your thesis,—which we all enjoyed. It is the best I have read to date on the work of Maybeck. I am glad that you did not attempt to deify him and that you assembled in your paper many of the little stories which reveal his human qualities as well as his aesthetic genius.

There was one item which I missed,—but maybe it could not well be included in a thesis. For some years he wore a strange garment,—a sort of combination pants-and-vest which came up to within a few inches of his chin. This rig was known in the profession as "Maybeck's directoire pants",—the reference being to a fashion in women's gowns; and the commonly accepted explanation was that Mrs. Maybeck made them for him on this pattern,—with buttons at the sides because he couldn't remember to button the standard type with buttons on the major axis. You know we didn't always have zippers.

As you see I have taken the liberty of having your thesis typed. I wanted a copy for myself and would also like to send a copy to our friend, Mrs. Harwell Harris, if you have no objection. As you know she is working on a book on Maybeck; and although she undoubtedly has most or all of this material you have gathered I am sure that she would enjoy reading your presentation.

Yours truly,

Walter T. Steilberg

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
OFFICE OF THE DEAN
BERKELEY

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December 28, 1933

Mr. Walter T. Steilberg
1 Orchard Lane
Berkeley, California

Dear Mr. Steilberg:

Last night on return to my home
I found in the mail a photograph of the Brooklyn
Bridge, a night scene in 1902 by John F. Strauss.
The donor wishes me Christmas Greetings "From a
former student W.T.S.-'10."

I judge this must be yourself.
I deeply appreciate the compliment. The print will
find a welcome place in my growing files of Bridge
data, which shall someday become a part of the
Engineering Library at the University.

When I passed you near Sather
Gate in the morning I did not know about this photograph.

I wish you Happy New Year.

Sincerely,



C. Derleth, Jr.
Dean, College of Engineering

CDJr:k

April 12, 1947.

Miss Jane Moorehead,
Mr. Rifat Parug,
Dawson, New Mexico.

My dear young friends:

You are both, both wise and fortunate, it seems to me; wise in your choice, and fortunate that the choice is reciprocal. And so I congratulate you both;—even though that may be a violation of Emily Post's notions of etiquette.

As you must have observed, one of the best ways to get to know anyone is to work with him—or her. The little subterfuges and false fronts of one sort or another which are used by men as well as women in social life, are of little avail in the class room or drafting room. In your four year's association as students you have had ample opportunity to see the real person.

In just these three weeks that Mr. Parug and I have worked together I presume to think that I have come to know him quite well. He is a careful, precise draftsman and it is obvious that he has a much better general education than the average American college graduate;—"bien né et bien élevé" as the French would say. And I would bet 10 to 1 that he is conscientious in all things, always considerate of others, possibly a bit too much of an idealist in a time which is decidedly opportunistic,—in general more of a christian than those who profess the faith.

In the case of Jane Moorehead I have not had as good an opportunity to make a psycho-analysis. But judging from her drawings—which tell a lot, a few brief conversations, and the many favorable comments of Mr. Goodman I would also bet 10 to 1 that she is very like Rifat Parug. Some say that unlike people are attracted to each other; but it seems to me that a definite similarity in principles and interests is a much sounder basis for life-long comradeship.

Ever since one of my cousins received 7 dozen fruit knives as wedding presents I have favored "folding gifts" which would leave the choice to the bride and groom; especially when the home has not yet been established. Possibly the one enclosed herewith will get you a pressure cooker, a toaster, — or a can opener; something to simplify the toil of housekeeping. Anyway, here's wishing you the best that life can bring.

Yours truly,

Personal

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December 26, 1951

Providence Hospital
Oakland, California

Gentlemen:

Possibly this letter should be addressed to the Mother Superior, or to the Superintendent, or to the Board of Directors, or to the Chief Nurse of the Surgical Ward. I don't know; so I am sending it to "Providence Hospital" in the hope that it will be delivered to the one or ones chiefly concerned.

Your records will show that I was one of your patients,—in Room 419, from December 17 to December 24. I am writing to thank you for excellent service, and for much besides; which I am sure helped me to recover from the operation performed by Dr. Hanley. It might be said that I am no judge of hospitals—not having occupied a hospital bed since 1921; but a man doesn't have three children and six grandchildren without spending some of the darkest and some of the brightest hours of his life within the walls of a hospital.

I liked everything about your hospital: my room, always kept in immaculate order, the ever competent and kind but never effusive attention of your nurses and their assistants, the Christmas carols, the visits by the Mother Superior and by the resident father, and the morning and evening prayers,—even though I am a Protestant, and a poor church attender at that.

At least a dozen, possibly two dozen, of your staff took care of my needs in one way or another. Some were Asiatics, some negroes, some white; some might have been sixteen, some sixty. I liked this definite evidence of a policy of fair employment; for if we are going to make this one world we had better begin at home; and if we are going to have any economic stability we must get away from the crazy notion that for all men and women an active life begins at one score and ends at three.

For a day or two I was thoroughly miserable; too uncomfortable to read or write or talk. At such times the Christmas music was most soothing. I wonder why someone does not make a thorough study of the therapeutic value of music. There is certainly a wealth of "medicine" to suit almost any case. And who could do it better than a hospital of the Catholic faith which has always been a sponsor of great music? I have been told that music is one of the "cures" used in mental hospitals; but it seems to me that it might well be used for all who are sick.

Enclosed is a small check for whatever charity of yours may need it most. This you may regard as not so much a contribution from me as from the many in your own staff who helped me to get well enough to go home a day ahead of schedule,—and thus save that much. You see, one of my ancestors was Scotch. I am not hoping to have need of hospital service again; but if I do I shall ask to be put in the care of Providence.

Yours truly,

Walter T. Steilberg

WTS/bc

May 25, 1957

Regents of the University of California
Berkeley 4
California

Gentlemen:

Enclosed herewith is a postal order
in the amount of \$80.00, a contribution to the
Julia Morgan Architectural Scholarship Fund.
This is given in memory of four friends who
were associated for many years with Miss Morgan
in her excellent work:

Ray Carlson, Draftsman, 1896-1952

David B. Farquharson, Builder, 1872-1936

Thaddeus Joy, Draftsman, 1884-1944

Dick Nussbaum, Draftsman, 1894-1946.

If other donations have been received
in their names, so much the better.

Your obedient servant,

Inigo Jones

c/o AIA 57 Post Street
San Francisco,
California

This letter was sent in care of the AIA in
the hope that it might suggest a contribution on
the part of the S.F. Chapter of the AIA. Possibly
it did.

C
000
WALTER T. STEILBERG,
CONSULTING ARCHITECT
NO. 1 ORCHARD LANE.
BERKELEY

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FRED MANUEL

TH. 3-1760

February 23, 1962

Judge William H. Brailsford
1421 Washington
Oakland, California

Dear Judge Brailsford:

Several experiences in jury duty have made me realize that the man who passes sentence often suffers more than many of those sentenced; -- it must sometimes be most difficult to show that "mercy which is the better part of justice," -- and at the same time provide the needed protection of society. For that reason I have been hesitant about writing to you regarding the case of Fred Manuel, -- recently sentenced by you to 180 days in jail, for driving without a license since July 1954. And I have been told that there were other items in his record which were not favorable.

In his violation of the law you heard the worst side of Fred Manuel. I know nothing of this side; but on the other hand I do know much about his better qualities, -- which might not have been adequately presented at a trial in which the accused pleaded guilty.

For more than five months I saw him almost every day at a difficult and dangerous job, -- working with skill, persistence and quiet good nature at a task of the exhausting sort which often makes men mean and quarrelsome. A major problem in this project, was the removal of many tons of rust damaged masonry, involving much drilling, sawing and chiseling of the stone with power and hand tools and the handling of many heavy fragments weighing from 20 to 100 lbs. each. Although the men who did this work are designated as "laborers" they were in fact required to use more skill and judgment, --- as well as more muscular effort than many of the "crafts" which have become so specialized and mechanized in recent years. Fred Manuel was one of the best of these "laborers"; that is not just my opinion; it is also that of his employers, the Dinwiddie Construction Co.; and it is that of the other workmen on this very competent construction crew; -- one of the best I have known in more than sixty years in this work.

Is there any possibility of a reduction or modification of his sentence? Can you suggest any way in which I could help him?

Yours truly,

Walter T. Steilberg

* Exterior Alterations.

Crocker Anglo Bank, 1 Montgomery St., S.F.

XVI CONCLUSION

WTS's View of History

Always fascinated and never indignant, as are so often the old, in his later years by the acceleration of science and technology in the last century, he wrote in the previously mentioned letter to Mrs. Heinrichs:

"My memoirs--which are quite clear from 1890 on, began in a world as different from the present as 1890 was different from the dawn of 'civilization.' I hope that in a few weeks or months I can record in a readable style some of my observations on the various parts of the world where I have worked. If I can do that, I shall certainly need your help."

Enclosed in this letter was a humorous proposal for a chiseled inscription for somewhere at UC Santa Cruz--presumably to be mounted with a frieze, also not too serious in execution. Here it is:

YOUNG ROMANS ON THEIR WAY TO
SOME FUNNY HAPPENINGS IN THE
FORUM. PROBABLY MARCUS TULLIUS
CICERO ASKED, "QUO USQUE TANDEM
ABUTERE PATIENTIA NOSTRA?" AND,
ALONG WITH OTHER ELDERS OF SEN-
ATUS POPULUSQUE ROMANUS, MUT-
TERED, "O TEMPORA, O MORES."

NOW SOME MM YEARS LATER IN
BERKELEY--AND ELSEWHERE,
HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF. TO
WHAT EXTENT AND HOW FAST? NOW
THAT WE CAN MAKE MORE HISTORY
IN A DECADE THAN THE ANCIENTS
MADE IN A MILLENNIUM?

LESS THAN VI CENTURIES AFTER
CICERO, ROME WAS IN RUINS AND
ITS ONCE WELL-ORDERED WORLD
WAS IN CHAOS. WHAT OF THE
YEAR MM? YOUNG AMERICANS,
ASIANS, EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS
WILL BE ON THEIR WAY TO WHAT
FUNNY HAPPENINGS? O TEMPORA,
O MORES.

His serious proposal for Cowell College at Santa Cruz, however,
was this:

IN MEMORY OF BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA 1899-1919
AN ABLE ADMINISTRATOR AND A GREAT TEACHER
WHO HAD THE RARE ABILITY OF OFFERING PERSON-TO-PERSON ADVICE
WHILE SPEAKING TO A CROWD OF FIVE OR TEN THOUSAND

He was fond of quoting Laura Dyer, his teacher of history at
San Diego High School, who said--to him, unforgettably--in 1903:

"If you doubt the Greek myths, you should read a good biography
of Alexander the Great--for example, the recent work by Professor
Wheeler. The labors of Herakles, the feats of Theseus, and the
adventures of Odysseus will then seem quite possible; and you will
know that fact is indeed stranger than fiction."

Both the whimsical "O tempora, o mores" and WTS's suggestion
for the inscription for Cowell College relate to the student unrest
of the 1960s as well as to civilization's rapid changes; the homage
to Wheeler refers directly to a story about student unrest in WTS's
time, to be quoted in a page or two.

Speaking with joy about his life span, WTS used to say, "What
a wonderful 100 years in which to have been alive! In little more
than my lifetime, our civilization has moved from being one essen-
tially based on muscle power--man, the horse, the ox--to one based
on machine power."

Each scientific discovery, each technological advance drew his
excited and welcoming intellectual response. By contrast, new waves
in the arts generally put him off, largely because he felt that a
construction of objets trouvés sculpture was a pose, or that a piece
of "chance" music may have masked the composer's lack of command over
the materials of sound. Sometimes he was absolutely right; other

times his response was what that of a 19th century man would have been: instantly reactionary--against.

Although he loved Asian calligraphy for the beauty of composition within each individual ideograph as well as for the kanji's rhythmic elegance in combination, he could never be persuaded (by me, at any rate) that a first-ranking, present-day abstract painter could exert the same powers of craft, mastery of the medium, and selection within an aesthetic vocabulary. As he grew older, his spirit moved increasingly further from the arts of today, responding more quickly and openly to the sciences--while warming itself still, however, at the hearthstones of painting, sculpture, and music of the past. In modern literature, however, he followed the field with avid and enthusiastically open-minded interest.

WTS and Youth

While WTS may have scoffed at many elements of design in today's architecture, he would always listen, with interest and absorption, to its protagonists among the younger architects and architecture students. In his later years, he became one of Berkeley's "secular saints," and there was a continuous pilgrimage of young people to 1 Orchard Lane. For although a charming raconteur, his memory ineradicable and with an overflowing storehouse of multi-faceted experience, he also truly listened and truly responded (unlike most virtuoso raconteurs) to a partner in conversation. As Evelyn Ratcliff commented, on p. 153 of the transcripts, he also truly listened, truly conversed with children, granting them the dignity of person-to-person interchange.

The Free Speech Movement of the '60s fascinated him, as it touched two areas of lifelong concern to him: high quality of teaching and the freedom of professors and students alike to examine any issue, no matter how controversial. Keeping a complete file on the FSM (as he did on any other timely topic, no matter what the field, that deeply interested him), he would applaud or condemn actions taken by dissident students or beleaguered university administrators according to his own judgments. During one of the early episodes of crisis, a stand was announced by members of the administration which WTS felt would only exacerbate the conflict--which indeed it did. When I told him that several typewriters had been tossed out of some ground-floor administrative offices, he quipped, "Typewriters! Those kids showed no imagination--why didn't they toss out a couple of deans!"

At another point, during the FSM, he said to me, "What's needed is reason. Those kids would listen to reason--it just needs to be offered them." By illustration, he told me of the famous incident of the student uprising in Berkeley during his own undergraduate years. "The conflicts were bloody," he recalled. "What's going on now is just a Halloween party by comparison. You see," he went on, "the issue was R.O.T.C. The boys hated it, and their resentment finally exploded, and there was near-warfare between the men students and the police...lots of injuries, broken heads, on both sides.

"Then President Wheeler took over. He came out in front of that mob--and it was a mob--on that horse of his, by himself, and he commanded their attention. (Today they'd call that quality of a commanding presence 'charisma.')

He told them that since R.O.T.C. was impossible to abolish, as the University was a land-grant college, the students should look at it realistically. R.O.T.C. was a condition of the University's existence itself, and the University's excellence was unquestioned. If that excellence was there, and it provided them with a first-rate education in exchange for a couple of hours of boredom, marching around with a gun twice a week--wasn't that a small price to pay?" (See pp. 35-38 of transcript.)

President Wheeler's ploy worked, according to WTS, and the students returned peacefully to the grumbling acceptance of R.O.T.C. which prevailed until its abolition during his grandsons' time.

The Conclusion

To cast back a bit in time--WTS used to tell a story about turn-of-the-century San Diego. There was one doctor only: William Burney, M.D. Dr. Burney was Black, he had been lovingly raised and educated by his slave-owner family, sent by them to medical school and subsequently freed by that same family. (He is now considered a major figure in Black history.) He came from the South to practice in the clearer air of the West, and as San Diego's sole physician, there could not very well exist any bias against him. There was also the indisputable fact that he was an excellent physician, and he became a very close friend of WTS's father, William Steilberg. (A parenthetical parallel is the fact that while WTS's opinion of lawyers in general was quite uncomplimentary--he would even, on occasion, refer

to them as "whereassers"--a good and valued friend was the Black attorney, later governor of the Virgin Islands, Walter Gordon, and Gordon was the only person he would turn to for legal counsel while the latter was still in Berkeley.)

Dr. Burney told WTS a story which he recounted to me several times as he grew older. It seems that in the province of Africa from which Burney's family had come, probably in the Kenya, the tribal custom was that an aged person take it upon himself as to when he wished to depart this life. He would announce his decision and thereupon his family and friends would all gather, give him a glorious party, get him thoroughly drunk into happy oblivion, and then shove him over the falls. WTS spoke musingly of this as a rather nice way to conclude one's life, when one considered today's alternative, the ignominy of a "convalescent home."

But when the fatal accident occurred, he had no intention whatever of "going over the falls." He was in the midst of a project for his beloved University, doing the framework for the Campanile's new carillon. He was confident of living to a vigorous 100, and this included a trip to mainland China--that life-long dream which had been too often thwarted either by revolutionary conditions or by his own professional commitments. Collecting additional material for the writing of his book on the arts and crafts of China required a trip there, and both the trip and the book had been a steadily burning flame of will since the '20s. He was planning a very positive future for himself, and for himself as a single person; at the time of his death, Elizabeth's survival had indeed seemed precarious and unlikely, and he had faced what he thought was the close-to-immediate loss--again--of a beloved wife, and of again reconstructing his own life.

The evening he was struck down, he was on his way to the nursing home to take her and to feed her, himself, freshly squeezed orange juice, Swiss cheese, French chocolates. (He hated seeing her and other oldsters, their faculties dwindling daily, in the humiliating dependence of nursing homes, which he called "death houses.") That first night in the hospital, directly after he had been disastrously hurt--for the car which struck him threw him twenty feet, causing such massive head and pelvic injuries that survival was truly not possible--he said to me, indignantly, "Drivers should watch where they're going. That right leg of mine really smarts, and it's going to be several days before I can be up and walking around on it."

The dreadful irony of the accident was that WTS, always cautious at crossings, had been in the middle of a brightly-lighted crosswalk when he was hit, and the driver of the car was another old gentleman, who simply had not seen him and whose vision and reflexes were such that he, poor man, probably should not have been driving at all. (Witnesses to the accident testified that WTS had waited scrupulously and had then crossed when there was not a car in sight.)

Later in the hospital, heartbreakingly tubed, bound, bandaged, monitored, and alternately in pain or drugged, WTS realized that he was dying--or if not, that he might be about to face a crippled and dependent old age. He said to me, "You're not going to put me in one of those death houses, are you?" and I assured him that never would I do this.

His last words to me, the day before he died, were infinitely touching, since even in the dark, stormy, desperate battle for his own survival, his tenderness for his family emerged radiantly. A year or so earlier, my youngest son, wishing to confirm his adulthood, had broken family ties and was staying temporarily out of touch. This had bothered WTS a great deal; he knew that I missed Roger much. Those final words, repeated several times, were "Roger came to see me...Roger came to see me." What a boundlessly unselfish kindness--his gift to me of this comforting reassurance, in the midst of his own final suffering!

For he had at last set aside hope for himself; but he kept it clear and lucid for those dear to him. Perhaps hope--the most re-nascent quality of the young--is our only fountain of youth.

The cardiologist among the physicians then caring for him said to me, "He has the heart of a twenty-year-old."

He had.

Helena Steilberg Lawton

August 1976
Berkeley, California

APPENDIX: Designs by WTS, prepared by Helena Steilberg Lawton.

The following list of over sixty residences and public buildings designed by Walter Steilberg is of those which I know positively were constructed; most are still in existence. I have not listed structural designs; these will be well documented, for the most part, among the materials in the architectural archive of the University of California at Berkeley.* The archive also contains plans and elevations, for submission to clients, of buildings which were not constructed, notably during the start of the Depression when economic factors caused many clients to change their minds about building even a fence.

In the course of the next year (1977), materials which are still somewhat scattered should be assembled and catalogued at both the architectural archive and The Bancroft Library; many of the missing addresses on the following list can then be filled in. Working drawings, blueprints, elevations, and "specs" offer a very complete picture of a house; even though it may have been painted Woolworth pink, basic form and style endure. I have pinpointed many designs on my list with only the name of the street and the "specs" to guide me. (In the '20s, the street number was almost never given on drawings or specifications. Moreover, anything not virtually a mansion was labeled a "cottage.")

I offer the researcher a hint which may be useful to him in tracking down designs' exact locations: the City of Berkeley has destroyed building permits and other pertinent construction records prior to about 1940, but the City of Oakland has retained such documentation. A large number of Claremont area houses are actually in Oakland but have Berkeley postal addresses, and the researcher would do well to investigate Oakland's records in cases where the address of a Berkeley house cannot be found. (I regret that time has not permitted me to do this myself.)

The researcher is urged to consult the catalogue of the architectural archive, once it is completed. The list of designs, both projected and executed, will be far longer than my catalogue which follows, and it is vivid evidence of that sprightly imagination of WTS's which was at work constantly and happily from six in the morning to midnight, nearly every day of his life.

Helena Steilberg Lawton

* Documents Collection, College of Environmental Design, Berkeley

Designs by Walter T. Steilberg

Panoramic Hill

- 38 Panoramic Way. Residence for Walter and Rowena Steilberg, 1917. Carved detailing by Rowena Steilberg.
- 1 Panoramic Way. Rental cottage, first structure on 1 Orchard Lane property, 1921. (Steilberg's own residence.)
- 1 Orchard Lane. Residence for Walter and Elizabeth Ferguson Steilberg and Mary Van E. Ferguson (Elizabeth's mother), 1922-23. (The family home the rest of WTS's life.)
- 4 Mosswood Lane. Rental residence, 1930. (Fabricrete.) Part of Steilberg property, east boundary of 1 Orchard Lane lot.
- 29 Mosswood Road. Residence for Marion Parsons, 1920.
- ...Mosswood Road. Rental cottage for Charles Mel, 1924. (On east corner of Mosswood as it turns from north to east.) Detail on garage not original design.
- 6 Mosswood Road. Rental residence for Charles Mel, 1930. (Fabricrete.)
- 101 Panoramic Way. Rental residence for Steilberg, 1931. (Fabricrete.) Dining room by Robert W. Ratcliff, architect, 1953. (Family home of Edward and Helena Lawton, 1941-58.)
- 65 Arden Road. Residence for Alfred Parker, 1935.
- 59/61 Panoramic Way. (Formerly 31 Panoramic.) Residence for Florence Atkinson, 1928. Second story added by Howard Moise, architect, 1954.
- 51 & 45 Canyon Road. Residences for Norah O'Connor, 1924.
- 5 Canyon Road. Rental cottage for Mrs. H.B. Torrey, 1935.
- 9 Canyon Road. Residence for Lincoln Hutchinson, c. 1920. (Attributed to Julia Morgan.) Addition by Will Hays, architect (date not known).

North Berkeley

- Le Roy & Rose Sts.,
Southwest corner. Residence for E.R. Vazeille, 1924.
- 1900 Yosemite Road. Residence for Robert W. Leavens, 1922.
- 1418 Le Roy. Residence for Ira B. Cross, 1923.
- 1456 Le Roy. Residence for Charles H. Ricker, 1925.
- 2323 Hearst Ave. Residence for Robert Wetmore, 1924.
- 101 Tamalpais Road. Residence for John Wright Buckham, 1930.
- ...Tamalpais Road. Residence for Eyes family, 1932.
- 1628 Euclid Ave. Residence for Golden W. Bell, 1923. (Badly altered.
Tiles also painted over in pink.)
- 2108 Eunice St. Residence for Alma Galbraith, 1921.
- 2317 Le Conte Ave. Apartment house for Elizabeth Clark, 1925.
- 1998 San Antonio Rd. Residence for Dr. James Corneille, 1929. (Perfectly
preserved.)
- 1416 Milvia. Residence for Weller family, c. 1920. (Not positive
identification; house was constructed near Milvia and
Vine.)

Central Berkeley

- College Women's Club, Bancroft Way & College Ave., 1928.
- University of California, Architectural Library, 1935.
- Manasse-Block Tanning Co. office building, 1300 Fourth St., 1936

Note: St. John's Presbyterian Church, College Ave. at Derby St., 1910, was designed by Steilberg while first draftsman for Julia Morgan; according to the custom of the time, however, she received total credit for the building, although her part in its design was largely decorative finishing touches, such as stained glass, flower boxes, etc.

Oakland

Boat landing and colonnades, north end of Lake Merritt, 1912. (WTS's first commission.)

Claremont Junior High School, 5150 College Ave. Wall plaques and medallions are by Rowena Steilberg. 1913. (WTS's second commission.) The building is scheduled for demolition September, 1976; however attempts will be made to salvage exterior decorative detail, grillwork, and bell for use on replacement building. WTS's building is on the Hayward fault, or nearby.

Oakland/Piedmont

230 Carmel Ave., Piedmont.	Residence for A.A. Thiel, 1922.
...Clarendon Crescent, Piedmont.	Residence for D.L. McKay, 1925.
.....	Residence for J.H. Godbold, 1922. (Specs: east side of Warfield Ave., between Cottage & Prince Aves., Oak- land; Lot 35, Block 841, Oakland Home- stead Tract.)
1442 Trestle Glen Ave.	Residence, 1922. (Brick: badly restored.)
.....	Residence for Martha G. Castor, Oak- land. 1921. (Specs: near Mills College, Lot 34, Block 13, Chevrolet Park Tract.)
...Chabot Road.	Residence for Herbert Blake, 1926.

Claremont Area (Berkeley/Oakland)

180 Stonewall Road.	Residence for Harold Sawyer, 1926.
196 Hillcrest Road.	Residence for Charles R. Stone, 1924. Addition, 1976, designed by David Fagerstrom.

Claremont Area (Berkeley/Oakland), cont.

- 83 Eucalyptus Road. Residence for George E. Lewis, 1921.
(Purchased in 1958 by Edward and
Helena Lawton as family home.)
- ...Tanglewood Road. Residence for T.J. Swift (formerly
Wrampelmeier--WTS's uncle Theodore),
1923. Address given in specs not
correct; a different site was chosen,
probably on Belrose. Access to WDs
and elevations would confirm exact
address. (Possibly 2787 Belrose.)

San Francisco

- Apartment house for T.J. Wrampelmeier,
1915. Original design for Berkeley
site; S.F. site preferred, building
erected there. (Address?)
- 15th and Balboa Ave. Apartment house for J.H. Jennings, 1922.

Peninsula

- Los Gatos, Hwy. Estate, "The Cats," for Charles Erskine
Scott Wood and Sara Bard Field. Large
residence, two studios, lodge, Greek
theater. Fountain detail by Rowena
Steilberg (posthumously). 1926.
- ...Blytheswood Dr., Los Gatos. Residence for Emily Seaman, 1930.
(Fabricrete.)

Southern California

- San Simeon, Hearst Estate. Three guest houses, 1921-23. (Errone-
ously attributed to Julia Morgan.
Morgan designed the "Castle," Steilberg
the guest houses in addition to struc-
tural engineering for the mansion.)

Southern California, cont.

...La Jolla.	Residence for G. Allen, 1933.
...Los Angeles.	Residence for Otto M. Reutinger (brother-in-law), 1905.
...El Cajon Blvd., San Diego.	Residence for William Steilberg (father), 1909.

Other

Happy Valley Rd., Lafayette.	Residence for William Shipley, 1941.
...Maine.	Residence for Anna Reutinger (aunt), 1911.

Designs constructed but still to be located among WTS's papers.

Residences in Berkeley for:	Wooley family, 1924. Garner family, c. 1925. Hood family, 1923. Zeitfuchs family, c. 1930. Mrs. Lohman, 1925.
Residences in Oakland for:	Underwood family, c. 1925. Dr. Ehrenberg, 1937. W.H. Leinert, 1922.

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and the University of California, Berkeley,
in English and history of art.

Feature writing and assistant woman's page
editor, Globe-Times, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
Free-lance writing and editing in Berkeley.
Volunteer work on starting a new Berkeley
newspaper.

Natural science docent at the Oakland Museum.

Editor in the Regional Oral History Office
since 1960, interviewing in the fields of
art, cultural history, environmental design,
photography, Berkeley and University history.

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